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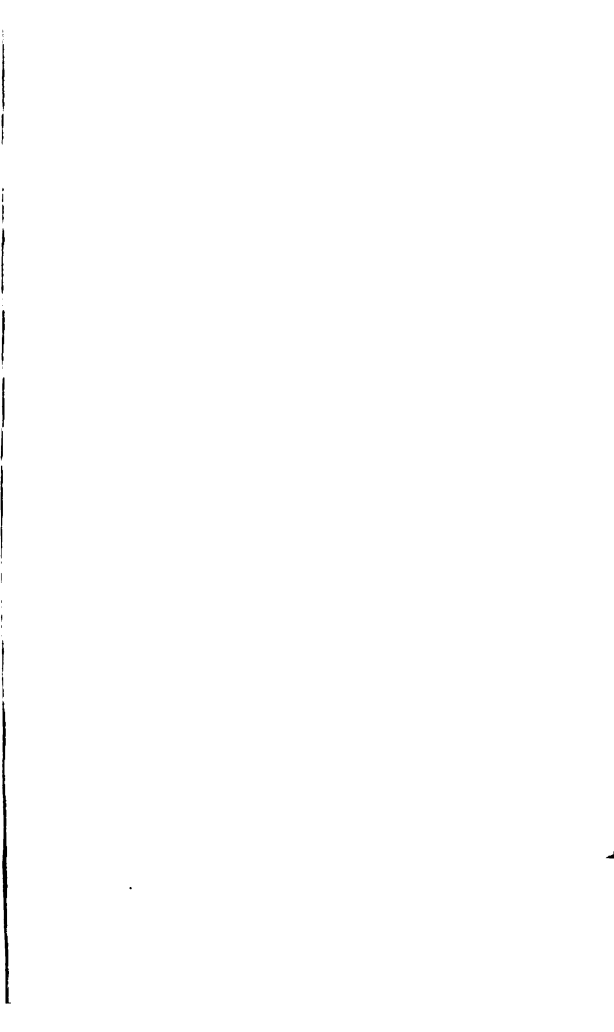
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NAS  
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**RAGNAR LODBROK AND THE SERPENT.**

See page 19



# STORIES

OF

# THE NORSEMEN.

REVISED BY DANIEL P. KIDDER. E

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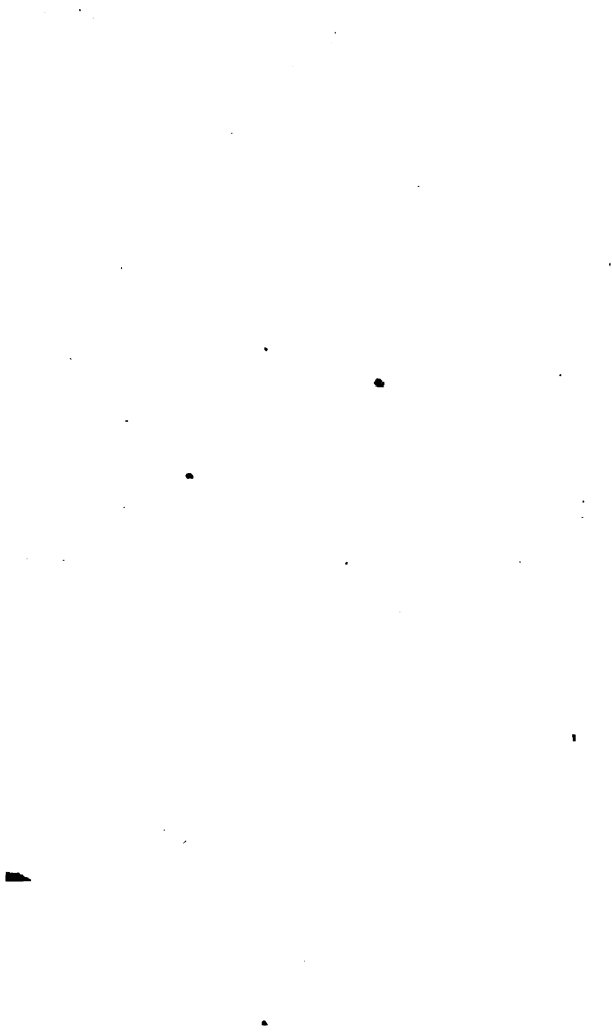
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## PREFACE.

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It is intended, in the following pages, to present a series of life-pictures, taken from that eventful portion of time in which the Norwegian people were so closely connected, both by invasion and colonization, with Great Britain and Ireland. This period of international communication began about the middle of the ninth century, when the northern pirates, (or Vikings, as they were then termed,) having made a descent upon the north-eastern coast of England under Ragnar Lodbrok, established themselves in Northumbria, which thus became a Danish<sup>o</sup> kingdom, tributary, often only in name, to the Anglo-

<sup>o</sup> It may be well to observe, that in our Anglo-Saxon history, all the northern people by whom England was invaded and overrun, were classed under the common appellation of "Danes."

Saxon kings. This period may be said to have terminated in 1066, when the renowned Harald Hardråde, King of Norway, landed in Yorkshire as the ally and supporter of Tostig, and was slain by the Saxon King Harold;—he who, only a few days later, perished in battle with William the Conqueror; Harald Hardråde's death being thus virtually avenged by one who, although a Frenchman by birth, was sprung from the same old race of Norsemen as himself.

The portion of history delineated in these pages being almost unknown to the youthful reader, it has been attempted, as far as possible, to offer a connected series of sketches, by means of which some idea may be formed of the social habits and manners of that barbarous period, and some knowledge acquired of the principal events of Norwegian history.

The following stories are strictly historical, as may be ascertained by a perusal of Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle of the Kings of

Norway, translated by Mr. Laing, and also of the first volume of Fryxell's History of Sweden. The History of the Anglo-Saxons by Sharon Turner, and Lappenberg's History of the Anglo-Saxon Kings, have likewise been frequently consulted for the verification of dates and events. It is, however, chiefly to the valuable translation of Mr. Laing that we are indebted for the substance, and even for the minutest particulars, of the ensuing stories.

In conclusion, we would suggest, that whatever degree of interest may attach to the following narratives, it increases tenfold when we reflect that it is to these rude Norwegians we are indebted for the germ of our national character, as well as our social institutions. One of our best modern poets has told us that

“The child is father to the man;”

as truly may it be affirmed that the untutored Norseman, with his hardy habits,

manly bearing, and resolute attachment to the laws and customs of his country, was the truest type as well as the progenitor of that race, who even now are distinguished among all the nations of the earth for their enterprise and stability.

## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE series of Short Stories from History, of which this volume is one, was originally published by the English "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge."

The series, for the present, will consist of ten volumes, viz:

ANCIENT ROME, 2 vols.  
THE NORSEMEN.  
ENGLAND, 2 vols.  
SPAIN.

SWEDEN.  
FRANCE.  
ITALY.  
MEXICO.

Other volumes may be added hereafter.

These brief narratives of leading historical events were prepared in a style not only well calculated to interest young persons, but to give them a taste for more systematic and extensive historical reading. They are also interwoven with appropriate moral reflections.

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# STORIES

OF

## THE NORSEMEN.

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### Ragnar Lodbrok.

It was a cold December evening, some few years ago; and as the snow-flakes drifted against the casements of Wetherby Manor, and the northern blast whistled through its turreted angles, many a one might have deemed that those time-stained walls could afford but a cheerless home to those who dwelt within them: but a single glance at the party who were there assembled round its drawing-room hearth would have conveyed a far different impression.

Within the lofty, old-fashioned chimney burned a pile of blazing logs; and a joyous family party, gathered together for the Christmas holydays, were grouped around

Mr. and Mrs. Daleson, the owners of the manor. Agnes, a lively little girl of eight or nine years of age, had seated herself on a low stool near her father's chair; and, looking up at him inquiringly, she said: "Are you not going to tell us a story, papa? you promised to do so this evening."

"And what shall it be?" asked Mr. Daleson, smiling at the eager child.

"Anything you please, papa; only let there be fairies, or ghosts, or something very wonderful, in it."

"And what kind of story do *you* wish for?" inquired Mr. Daleson, turning to a boy and girl somewhat older than Agnes.

"O, papa, let it be about real men and women," replied Margaret; "I don't like fairies and ghosts: they only frighten me; besides, I don't believe in them."

"And do let us have warriors and princesses in the story!" exclaimed Henry.

"And I," said Mrs. Daleson, looking at her children,—*"if I am not considered too old to give my opinion in the matter, would like to have boys and girls introduced into the narrative."*

"Yes, yes; let us have boys and girls!" exclaimed the children; "and a papa and mamma, too!"

"It will be somewhat difficult, methinks, to fulfill all these conditions," observed Mr. Daleson, smiling; "for—let me see—there are to be fairies, or marvelous beings of some sort or other; there are, on the other hand, to be only real men and women; and then, there are to be warriors and princesses; besides which, I must introduce boys and girls, and a papa and mamma into my story. Well, I am not disposed to shrink from the task, for difficulties are 'but the whetting-stone to a brave man's purpose.' So I will begin my story at once; and hope it may interest you the more, when I tell you that some of its personages have been in this very neighborhood where we live, and that it is not at all improbable that some of those concerned may have been your own forefathers."

"O, how delightful!" exclaimed Margaret, drawing closer to her father. "Then they must be quite real people."

"Ah!" said Agnes, in a low tone, "I am afraid we shall have no fairies after all!"

Without noticing their observations, Mr. Daleson began as follows:—

“It is now a long while ago,—about a thousand years or more,—since there dwelt on the eastern coast of Sweden a rich and mighty Earl (or Jarl, as such a person was then called) named Heröd. He was a brave man, and much honored by the people of his own country, because he was a descendant of the conqueror Odin, who, having come out of Asia, had subdued that northern country, and had, ever since his death, been worshiped as a god; for at that time the people of the North were poor ignorant heathens. They had never heard of God’s great love toward mankind, in having sent his only Son to die for sinners; but they bowed down to idols of wood and stone, to which they offered sacrifices; and Odin being the chief of their idols, they paid great reverence to those who were his descendants.

“So Earl Heröd was always treated with respect in public: nor was he less happy in his own home; for he had a daughter, named Tora, who was the joy of his heart and the pride of his life. It was univer-

sally said that she was as virtuous as she was beautiful; and she, being fond of retirement, received the surname of 'Borgarhjort,' or Castle Deer, because she sat in a high room, shut up with a wall round it like a castle, and because in beauty she surpassed all other women, as the deer does all other animals. Her father, desiring to please her in every possible way, gave her a small and most beautiful snake, which had been sent to him as a rarity. It was at first coiled in a little box, but soon began to grow till the box was too small for it; finally, it grew too large for the room to hold it, and lay around the outer wall, where it became so vicious, that none dared to approach to the maiden except the person who fed the snake, which consumed an ox at a meal. The Jarl thought all this was a great annoyance, and at last made a promise to give his daughter, with a great dower, to that man, whoever he were, who should kill the serpent. This promise was spoken of far and wide: but so great was the dread the snake inspired, that none dared to venture for the high reward.

“ Now at this time there reigned in Sweden a king named Sigurd Ring, whose only son, Ragnar, although still a mere youth, had already gained the reputation of a matchless warrior, and like all the northern princes of that period, passed much of his time at sea, where, with a chosen band of men, he committed great ravages on the neighboring coasts of Denmark and Norway; for in those days men were reckless of destroying life, and thought only of gathering booty, and capturing slaves, which were carried away from their homes in triumph. Ragnar was returning from a foray of this sort in Denmark, when, as he approached the southern coast of Sweden, a strange and appalling spectacle met his gaze. A noble vessel, whose gilded and vermilion sides bespoke a royal master, came rushing onward, being impelled by a strong and steady wind which filled its outspread sails, while from its deck arose a column of flame which threatened it with immediate destruction. No human being was visible on board, save one man of lofty stature, who stood bending over some object

on the deck in an attitude of passionate despair. Onward sped the fiery vessel, like a bird of flame skimming the surface of the deep, till it crossed near Ragnar's ship; happily for him, however, it touched him not, but darted so swiftly past the bow of his vessel, that he had only time to recognize his father in the noble form, and to behold him plunge a sword into his body and fall lifeless upon the deck. Ragnar looked back aghast upon the fearful spectacle. In a few moments more the whole vessel was enveloped in flames; and the burning spars which were falling on all sides, obliged Ragnar to hasten away from the scene. On landing in Sweden he learned that the king, his father, having in his old age fallen in love with a princess, who for her great beauty was called *Alfsol*, or the Sun, demanded her in marriage, and, on meeting with a refusal, made war upon her brothers, and defeated them with great slaughter. After the battle he ordered *Alfsol* to be sought for; but poison having been given to her by her brothers, lest she should fall into his hands, he only found her corpse.

The old king was so enraged by this disappointment that he resolved to live no longer. He therefore commanded all the dead bodies to be carried into a ship, seated himself by the rudder in the stern, and laid the body of Alfsol by his side. He afterward caused the ship to be set on fire with sulphur and pitch, hoisted all the sails, and steered with a steady wind out to sea, saying, 'that he would come with magnificence, as befitted a mighty king, to Odin.'"

"O, how frightful an end!" exclaimed Margaret, as her father paused a moment in his story. "Was it not very wicked of Alfsol's brothers to poison her?—and also of Sigurd Ring to put an end to himself in that way, papa?"

"You must remember, my dear," replied Mr. Daleson, "that they were ignorant heathens, whose very religion, instead of inculcating meekness and forbearance, taught them to be proud and cruel; moreover, they thought it lawful, and even noble, whenever life became either painful or wearisome to them, to put an end to it, and thus, as they expressed it, 'come to Odin.'"



“And what became of Ragnar?” inquired Henry.

“He caused an enormous mound of stones to be raised on the shore to his father’s memory; and, having done so, turned his thoughts into a very different channel; for it appears that immediately on his landing he had heard Jarl Heröd’s promise spoken of; and, though he seemed to take no notice of it, he inwardly resolved to undertake the daring enterprise, from which all other men shrunk back with fear and hopelessness. Accordingly he caused a coat to be made for himself of hairy skin, and a cloak of the same kind. These he caused to be boiled in pitch, drawn through sand, and finally hardened in the sun. The following summer he sailed with his fleet to East Gothland; and, anchoring in the night-time within a bay close to Jarl Heröd’s dwelling, he put on his strange costume; and at the early dawn, next day, he went ashore, taking the way to the maiden’s bower. There he saw the monstrous serpent lying coiled up in a ring, and struck it so powerfully with his lance, that he drove it right through the creature’s

body; on which the snake struggled so hard, that the lance broke in the middle; and though it spit out venom at Ragnar, his stony dress preserved him from it. The monster had received its death-wound, and made such a noise in its struggles, that the whole maiden-bower shook again. Tora, awaking out of sleep, looked from her window to see what was the matter. She saw, below, a very tall man; but as it was yet but gray dawn, she could not distinguish his features. She asked, therefore, who he was, and what he wanted. Ragnar then answered with this verse:—

‘For the fair maid and wise

My life I gladly risk.

Scarce eighteen summers hath he seen,

Who the fierce monster now hath slain.’

More than this he did not say, but took the broken handle with him, leaving the rest of the lance in the serpent’s body. In the morning all this was related to Heröd, who drew out the lance, and found it to be so, heavy that few could move it. Being anxious to know his daughter’s deliverer, he summoned immediately a general *Thing*

(or gathering) of the men in his dominions, believing that the serpent-slayer would appear among them, and claim his reward.

“ News of the meeting reached Ragnar in his ship, and he accordingly went with his men, and stood at a little distance from the crowd already assembled. The Jarl stood up, and, after relating what had happened, begged that he who possessed the handle of the broken lance would produce it, pledging himself to keep his promise with him who did so, whether he were high or low. The head was now carried round, but none could show the handle. Afterward it was brought to Ragnar, who produced the other part; upon which he was greeted with applause by the multitude; and the Jarl made a great feast for him and his men, upon which occasion Tora appeared, and Ragnar, becoming much enamored with her, asked her for his queen. This was granted, and the entertainment was changed into a magnificent bridal; after which Ragnar conducted his bride home to his kingdom, and became very famous on account of this expedition.

which gained for him the surname of Lod-brok, in reference to his strange costume. After this, Ragnar set himself to govern his father's kingdom, and loved the gentle Tora so well, that, for her sake, he passed much of his time at home, not going out on Viking expeditions so much as before. But, after many years of happiness, Tora fell sick and died, leaving two sons, Erik and Agnar, who were as brave and as handsome as their father. Her death was a great grief to Ragnar, who declared that he would never marry again. He felt now no comfort at home; so he set his sons to rule his kingdom, and wandered about on warlike expeditions to dissipate his sorrow.

“While Ragnar is thus roving abroad in quest of consolation, let me introduce you to another traveler, who lived at the same period, and with whom I wish you to become acquainted. There was a celebrated poet (or Scald, as poets were then denominated) named Heimer, who dwelt in Germany at the court of Sigurd Farnisbane, one of the greatest heroes of all those nations who spoke the Northern language. Now

It happened that, through the treachery and cruelty of some false friends, Sigurd and his noble wife Brynhilda, with their children, were put to death. One alone of their offspring escaped—a little girl, named Aslanga, of exceeding beauty, but very diminutive in stature. No one cared for her but the faithful Heimer, who resolved, if possible, to save her from her father's foes. Heimer was noted, not only for his gift of song, but also for his lofty stature and great strength. Accordingly he had a very large harp made, in which he laid the child, together with much gold and many precious things. He then commenced his wanderings up to the North to avoid Sigurd's enemies, carrying the harp everywhere with him. When he came to streams, in solitary woods, he let the maid come out of the harp to bathe herself, watching the while lest any stranger should approach the place. At other times he kept her shut up, allowing her only some breathing holes, too small for a stranger to detect. The poor child would sometimes weep, thinking herself solitary and abandoned; but, on hearing

her sobs, he struck the harp with so masterly a hand, that the maid became silent and listened to it.

“After long wanderings, they came one evening to a cottage called Spangarhead, in Norway, where an old man of the name of Ake lived with his wife Grima. She was alone at home, and asked who Heimer was. He said he was a beggar, and sought a lodging for the night; but as he was warming himself by the hearth, Grima saw by the fire light a gold bracelet glimmering under his rags, and some precious embroidery sticking out of the harp. Grima then with great willingness granted his request; but said he would not be able to get any peace in that room, on account of her and her old man’s gabbling, and bade him therefore lie in a barn, which she showed him.

“When her husband presently after came home, Grima related the whole circumstance to him, counseling him to murder Heimer while he slept, and thus secure to themselves riches enough to live the rest of their lives without labor and trouble. He an-

swered, 'That it seemed to him a base act to betray his guest:' upon which Grima said, 'Thou art little of a man, and very timid; but thou shalt either kill him now, or I will have him for my husband, and we shall kill you;' accusing the man, moreover, of rudeness before her husband's return. Then was Ake highly irritated, and everything was done as this wicked woman desired: they crept into the barn, and Ake with his ax gave the sleeping Heimer his death-wound. After this they carried the harp into their cottage, and struck a light. They tried to open it; but it was so curiously closed, that they could not find the spring, and were obliged to break it up. You may imagine their astonishment on finding Aslauga resting amid costly stuffs and golden ornaments. They were alarmed at the discovery, and Ake exclaimed, 'Here the proverb becomes true, that ill-luck attends him who betrays a trusting guest.' As for Aslauga, she felt at first terrified at their conduct; but despite her child-like age and aspect, she had a brave and prudent spirit: so when Grima inquired of her age, she re-

mained silent. The old woman gazed at her with wonder and perplexity."

"Don't you think, papa," interrupted Agnes, with sparkling eyes and heightened color, "don't you think she must have taken Aslauga for a fairy?"

"It is very likely she did," replied her father; "for in those days people believed implicitly in fairies, as well as in many other sorts of supernatural beings who we now know have not any existence, save in ballads and story-books."

Agnes looked down disappointed; for the fairies were so dear to her childish thoughts, that she was loth to think of them as mere shadowy creatures of the imagination. "But," resumed Mr. Daleson, "to go on with my story:—The old man, on beholding this young and beautiful child stand before him, said to his wife, 'It will go ill with our business, according to my prophecy. What are we to do with this child?' Grima said, 'She shall pass for our own child, and she shall be called Kraka, after my mother.' 'There is no chance of any one believing that we, who are such an ugly, ill-shaped



couple, can have so fair a daughter,' said the old man. 'You are so dull,' retorted his wife, 'that you can never find out a good plan; but leave it to me, and I will manage it all cleverly. I will rub tar on her head, which will soon prevent her hair from growing; and when she is dressed in rags, and does plenty of hard work, she will be ugly enough, I warrant you.'

"And thus they did; and Aslauga grew up amid poverty and hardship; and as she never uttered a word, she was considered dumb; but many proud thoughts and impatient longings dwelt within her mind, and she pined for an opportunity to escape from her tyrants. There seemed, however, but little probability of her desire being accomplished, as the neighborhood was so lonely that she never saw any one but a cowherd or a beggar.

"At this time Ragnar Lodbrok was on his sea expeditions, trying to forget his sorrow for Tora's death; and one summer, as he was coasting Norway, he anchored his ships in a small bay. In the morning the provision men were sent on shore to bake

bread, and, seeing a house not far off, they went there that they might bake more conveniently. This house was Spangarhead. Kraka had gone out early in the morning with cattle; but when she saw so many ships coming that way, she bathed herself in the mountain stream, and combed her hair, though this had been strictly forbidden by Grima. She afterward returned home, and arrived as the ship's cooks were already busied in heating the oven. They asked Grima if Kraka were her daughter; which she answered affirmatively. 'Then you are very different,' replied the men; 'for she is very lovely, and thou art as ugly as a witch.' Grima answered, 'I also was considered very beautiful in the days that I dwelt in my father's village; though no one can perceive it now, because I am much changed.' They now requested that Kraka might knead the dough for them, which she did so skillfully that they said she was as clever as she was fair. On their return to the ship they mentioned in presence of Ragnar, that they had beheld 'the loveliest maiden that could be seen anywhere.' 'She

is not as beautiful as Tora,' said Ragnar; but they persisted in pronouncing her to be no way her inferior. Ragnar was displeased with this assertion, and, resolving to judge for himself whether it were so, dispatched some messengers forthwith to Spangarhead, requesting that Grima might send her daughter to visit him in his ship, and promising to restore her safely and speedily to her home, as soon as she desired it. Grima did not dare to refuse King Ragnar's command; but she expostulated with the messengers, saying there must be some mistake in the matter, for so mighty a man as Ragnar, who was lord over Sweden, Denmark, and part of Norway, could not desire to see a poor girl like her daughter. But they persisted in their demand; and Kraka signifying by signs her willingness to obey, she accompanied them on board the admiral's galley, where Ragnar was waiting to receive her in his royal cabin. Kraka was still in her poor coarse garments; but her long hair waved around her like a silken vail, reaching to the ground. Ragnar was obliged to confess that she was even lovelier

than his beloved Tora; and, appealing to Odin as a witness of his truth, he besought the maiden to abide with him and become his wife. On hearing this request, Kraka opened her lips for the first time, and said: 'My lord promised peace, let him keep it also. Kraka has come; may the king let her go.'

"Ragnar now desired his treasurer to produce the gold-embroidered petticoat which had been Tora's, and offered it to Kraka, with these words in verse:—

'Know'st thou, maiden, what is this?  
The robe that Tora Borgarjhort adorn'd!  
To thee I offer-it. It suits thee well.  
Oft have her white hands o'er it playful glanced;  
Lovely and kind was she to me till death.'

Kraka answered in the same strain:—

'I dare not take the gold-embroider'd robe,  
Which erst did Tora Borgarjhort adorn.  
It suiteth not my low estate. Kraka I am call'd.  
Coarse is my homely dress of coal-black baize;  
My only friends the bleating goats, whom on  
The rocky sea-shore I do dayly tend.'

"And now I will go home,' added Kraka;  
'and if the king's mind does not change, he

can hereafter send for me.' On which she returned to Spangarhead.

"Ragnar proceeded to the place for which he was bound; but Kraka had made so deep an impression upon him that she was continually in his thoughts, and he marveled how so lowly a maiden had acquired so much modest dignity of mien and manner. It was not long before he returned to Spangarhead, and sent men to fetch Kraka to be his queen. This was good news to the poor and friendless girl, and she gladly obeyed the summons; but before leaving Spangarhead, she went to Ake and Grima and told them she was going away. 'And I know well,' added she, 'that you killed my foster father, and none have done me greater evil than you. But I will do you no harm; this only I wish you, that every day may be worse than the one before, and the last worst of all.'

"Kraka was honorably received by Ragnar Lodbrok; and on arriving at Lejre in Zealand, where he usually dwelt, their marriage was celebrated with great splendor. Before the conclusion of the bridal entertainment, however, some of the guests be-

gan to say, that it would have been far more fitting for a mighty king, like Ragnar, to have had a king's daughter for his queen, than to marry a peasant girl like Kraka. These words reaching Ragnar's ears, a cloud of displeasure overshadowed his brow; and Kraka, learning the cause of her husband's gloom, hastened to dispel it by revealing to him, in presence of his court, that she was in no way a peasant's daughter, but of royal descent, both by her paternal and maternal ancestry. She then gave an account of her parents' misfortunes, and of her own early history; and Ragnar was so well pleased at this unexpected discovery, that Kraka (or Aslauga, as we must now call her) became still dearer to him than before.

"Ragnar and Aslauga had four sons, all of whom were renowned warriors; but the oldest, Iwar, was not less celebrated for his wisdom and prudence than for his bravery. Aslauga was so kind a step-mother, that she was as much beloved by the sons of Tora as by her own children; and in the following anecdote we have a singular proof of their mutual affection:—

“Erik, the son of Tora, having fallen, with his brother Agnar, on the field of battle, drew a ring off his hand, and, delivering it to one of his followers, desired that it should be carried to Aslauga; singing thus in his dying moments:—

‘Quickly speak the words,  
Fallen are Erik’s warriors!  
Sorely will Aslauga grieve  
When of my death she hears.  
My noble step-mother  
Will tell it to her sons.’

“After this he gave up his life with cheerfulness, and his men returned again to Lejre. They found Aslauga alone, Ragnar and her sons being at sea. The man advanced toward her, and said they were the bearers of evil news. Then she asked with great anguish what tidings they had brought, and if the king’s sons had fallen. On which the men related how all had passed; and when they came to Erik’s song, as he sent her the ring, the people remarked that she shed tears resembling blood in their color; no creature having ever seen her weep before or since that day. She answered that she was now alone, and unable to do any-

thing, but that she would afterward take vengeance for Agnar and Erik, as if they had been her own sons; a promise which was subsequently most amply fulfilled; but I need not stay to tell you how they were avenged, as it does not form part of the web of our story.

“Meanwhile Ragnar was advancing in years, and he heard with joy the prowess of his sons, who, after having captured and pillaged Paris, the capital of the Frankish empire, had ravaged the south of Europe, and even threatened Rome with their arms. Hereby they gained much renown, and were so much dreaded that there was not a child who did not speak with terror of Ragnar’s sons.

“The old man was sitting at home with Aslauga when these tidings reached his ears; and as it was told him again and again that ‘none can compare with Ragnar’s sons,’ he was seized with an earnest longing again to set out on some sea expedition, that his old fame in arms might not rust, thinking he ought to be as good as his sons. In his youth he had subdued Northumbria, and



imposed a tax upon its king. This tribute had subsequently been refused; and his sons had been unsuccessful in their attempts to reduce the brave Northumbrians to obedience. So obstinate and intrepid was their resistance, that their northern foes, in accordance with their own superstitious faith, accused the English with using magic against them.

“Now Ragnar deemed it would be the crowning point of his fame if he could subdue these sturdy islanders. He did not at first communicate his intentions to any one; but he caused two large ships to be built, and a powerful army to be in readiness to accompany him. The news of this threw all the neighboring kings into alarm, and each one kept a sharp look-out on his own frontiers. But when Aslauga asked whither he was bound, he answered, ‘For England.’ She said he ought to have many more ships for the purpose; but he replied that it would not be a difficult matter to take England with many ships, but that to do so with two was an exploit worthy of a great warrior. Aslauga next objected that the large vessels

he had built were not fitted to run into the English ports, and that they would suffer shipwreck upon the coast. But Ragnar had got this project fixed in his mind, and was not to be turned from it. As soon as a favorable wind sprung up, he ordered his men to go on board; and his noble-minded wife, having failed in her attempt to dissuade him from this rash enterprise, accompanied him to the ship, and then said she would now recompense him for Tora's gold-embroidered petticoat, which he had formerly given to her. She accordingly gave him a shirt of grayish silk, which was woven throughout, and in which there was no seam, promising him that steel could have no effect upon him while he wore it, as it was blest by the gods.

"Ragnar accepted the gift, and said he would not fail to wear it; thereupon he set off: but every one could perceive that this separation went to Aslauga's heart.

"As Ragnar was approaching the Northumbrian coast, a violent storm arose, which threw his ships upon the shore, where they were broken to pieces. Ragnar, however, with his followers, succeeded in landing, and

moved boldly onward, to plunder and ravage, as if disdaining to recollect how critical was his position amid a warlike nation, from whom he had no means of retreat.

“King Etheldred, who by his spies had heard of Ragnar’s expedition, had a great army, consisting of all who could wield arms, and the best horsemen in all England, assembled ready to receive him. He gave orders to his troops, however, not to aim any pointed weapons against Ragnar; ‘for,’ said he, ‘Ragnar has sons who would never leave us in peace if he were to fall here.’ A fierce though unequal conflict ensued. Ragnar, clothed in the silken shirt which he had received from his beloved Aslauga at their parting, four times pierced the ranks of Etheldred, and slew a multitude of his foes. At length, however, all his men had fallen, and he found himself inclosed in a wall of shields, and so was taken prisoner. He refused to tell his name; so Etheldred commanded him to be cast into a pit full of serpents; but they did not touch him. The men then drew off his silken shirt, after which the reptiles fastened upon him.

“In this dreadful position Ragnar maintained his usual bravery and composure; and, instead of lamenting his fate, solaced himself in singing his former exploits and his fifty battles. This Quida, or death song, is still extant, and while it breathes a most ferocious spirit, abounds also in passages of wild poetic beauty.

“After celebrating his successful depredations in Perthshire, in the Orkneys, in Northumbria, in the Hebrides, in Ireland, and Anglesea, besides other exploits on the continent of Europe, Ragnar expresses in lofty terms his contempt of death: and as you may like to hear what sort of poetry kings made in those days, I will give you a literal translation of the closing stanzas:—

‘In the house of the mighty Odin  
No brave man laments his death.  
Neither do I come with the voice  
Of despair into Odin’s hall.  
How eagerly would Aslauga’s sons  
Now rush to the battle-field,  
Did they know their sire’s distress,  
Whom circling snakes with venom tear!  
I to my children have a mother given,  
Who has with valor fill’d their carts.

'Now is my end approaching fast!  
Within my heart a serpent dwells.  
But with the blood of England's king  
The sword of my sons shall yet be stain'd.  
The valiant youths will glow with wrath,  
Nor will they sit at home in peace.  
Fifty times and one have I my standard rear'd  
Upon the battle-field. E'en in my youth  
I learn'd to dye my sword in blood;  
No king could rival me in glorious fame.

'The goddesses of death now call me home;  
They whom Odin from Walhalla sends:  
Therefore must my song of triumph cease.  
I do not mourn my cruel death,  
For there shall I sit upon a lofty seat,  
And quaff all joyously in Odin's hall  
With the Asars on their kingly thrones.  
Lo! hence they beckon me away.  
The hours of my life are running out.  
Smiling do I die!'

"When this death-song was repeated to Etheldred, he easily discovered that it was Ragnar who had been thus cruelly put to death; and, apprehensive of the vengeance of his sons, he resolved to send an embassy to them, offering to make atonement for the death of their father; and he desired his ambassadors to take especial note of the

gestures and behavior of each, as he heard the story of Ragnar's death.

"When these arrived in presence of the brothers, Sigurd and Huitserk sat playing draughts, and Biorn stood in the middle of the room putting a handle to his lance. The ambassadors entered, and, saluting the wise and prudent Iwar with deference, said that they were sent by Etheldred to announce Ragnar's death. Then Sigurd and Huitserk let the draught-board fall; but Iwar calmly requested the messengers to relate all the particulars. They did so; and when they came to the place where Ragnar said—

'How eagerly would Aslauga's sons  
Now rush to the battle-field,  
Did they know their sire's distress!' &c.,

Biorn grasped the handle of the lance so hard that he left the marks of his fingers in it, and then hacked it so violently that it broke in pieces. Huitserk pressed the draughtsmen which he held in his hand with such force, that the blood sprung to the point of each finger. Sigurd sat paring his nails with a knife, and listened with such attention to the relation, that he did

not remark he had cut himself to the bone, and seeing it he did not heed it. Iwar asked carefully about every particular; and his color sometimes became blue, sometimes pale, sometimes red. Huitserk wanted to cut down the messengers upon the spot: but Iwar bade them go in peace; and so they returned home. When Etheldred was informed of the brothers' gestures he said, 'We have most to fear from Iwar's temper, though nothing good toward us is boded by the actions of the others;' and he therefore caused his coasts to be carefully watched, lest an enemy should fall upon him unawares.

"The brothers now prepared for revenge; but Iwar said he would take no part in it, nor fight with Etheldred, who was innocent, as Ragnar had been the sole cause of his own ruin. The others were angry, and said they 'would not cross their hands upon their knees, and endure such a shame, even if Iwar would; and that it ill became them, who had killed so many innocent men, to draw back for this one.' They therefore began to gather their men; although no great numbers joined them, when it was known that the

wise Iwar was averse to the expedition. The brothers set out, but they found Etheldred already prepared,—were overcome by superior numbers, and obliged to fly to their ships again. Iwar, who had also accompanied them, though he took no part in the combat, said he ‘would now go over to King Etheldred, and take an atonement for his father, rather than meet with more such disasters as the present.’ Huitserk answered, that he ‘would never take an atonement for his father’s death, and that they would bear no part with Iwar;’ on which they sailed home. But Iwar went to Etheldred, and did as he had said. The king would not believe him, till Iwar swore to him never to carry arms against him. Iwar then asked, as the atonement for Ragnar’s death, as much land as he could cover with an ox-hide; which was willingly granted by Etheldred. Iwar now got a very large hide, and caused it to be steeped and stretched many times, and at last cut into the very narrowest strips, which were sewed together, with which he surrounded a large space on a height, and there founded a castle, which



he named Lundana, (Lincoln.) Here he gathered round him many of his own countrymen: and a number of the neighboring English also removed thither; for Iwar was soon renowned for his generosity and good counsel, with which he often aided even King Etheldred, who gradually forgot to mistrust his foe. But Iwar's thirst for vengeance was not the less deep or deadly because of its delay. When several years had passed thus, he sent to ask from his brothers his share in the inheritance of Ragnar's movables, and by means of the costly treasure then sent to him, he acquired the good-will and friendship of the English chiefs, who even pledged themselves to remain neuter in case of a war breaking out between Iwar and Etheldred.

“ After this he sent to advise his brothers to hasten over to England with the largest force they could collect, as Etheldred was but ill-prepared to oppose them. They now comprehended Iwar's devices, and did as he desired. On their arrival in England Iwar remained neutral, according to his pledge; but through his intrigues Etheldred was

but inadequately supported by his subjects ; and the brothers attacked him with such success, that his troops were dispersed and himself taken prisoner. Iwar had not fought against him, for his oath's sake ; but he now advanced, and bade him remember what death he had made their father suffer ; adding that it would ill befit the sons of Aslanga to leave Ragnar unrevenged. By Iwar's orders, therefore, Etheldred was barbarously put to death.

“ Iwar was so well satisfied with his island home, that he never quitted it ; and, having seized the dominions of Etheldred, he reigned over the eastern and northern parts of England, then called Northumbria, which he gradually colonized with his own countrymen ; thus infusing new elements of liberty as well as of bravery into the British character ; for the northern laws prevailed for some centuries throughout the greater portion of England, and in some of them may be traced the germs of our own glorious constitution. But I am not going to talk to you on this subject now ; for Ragnar being slain, and his death avenged, my

story may be considered at an end, unless you wish to hear what became of his other sons."

"O yes, papa!" exclaimed Henry; "do let us know all about them, if you please."

"There is not much to tell," replied his father. "Biorn got those parts of Sweden which had been under his father's sway, and became the ancestor of many Swedish kings. Huitserk got Jutland, and the southern coast of the Baltic. Sigurd got the Danish isles, and the southern parts of Norway; and from his daughter Aslauga descended a celebrated man called Harald Haarfager, the first king of all Norway, whose history I may perhaps relate to you some other evening, if you care to hear anything more about 'our Norse forefathers.'"

The young people, with one accord, expressed the pleasure they had felt in listening to his narrative. "And," added Henry, "I think that Ragnar was a noble fellow. He was so brave and so bold! . . . and he must have been very kind too: else Tor and Aslauga would not have loved him so well."

"But what became of Aslauga?" inquired Mrs. Daleson; "you have not told us that yet."

"I am sorry," replied her husband, "not to be able to satisfy you in this particular; for no mention is made of her after Ragnar's death. Nor is this, perhaps, to be wondered at; for, with all her heroic qualities, Aslauga's thoughts, from the day of her marriage, seem to have been wrapt up in her husband and sons; and it would appear as if, after Ragnar's death, she had retired from the busy tumult of a court life, as her name appears no more upon the page of history."

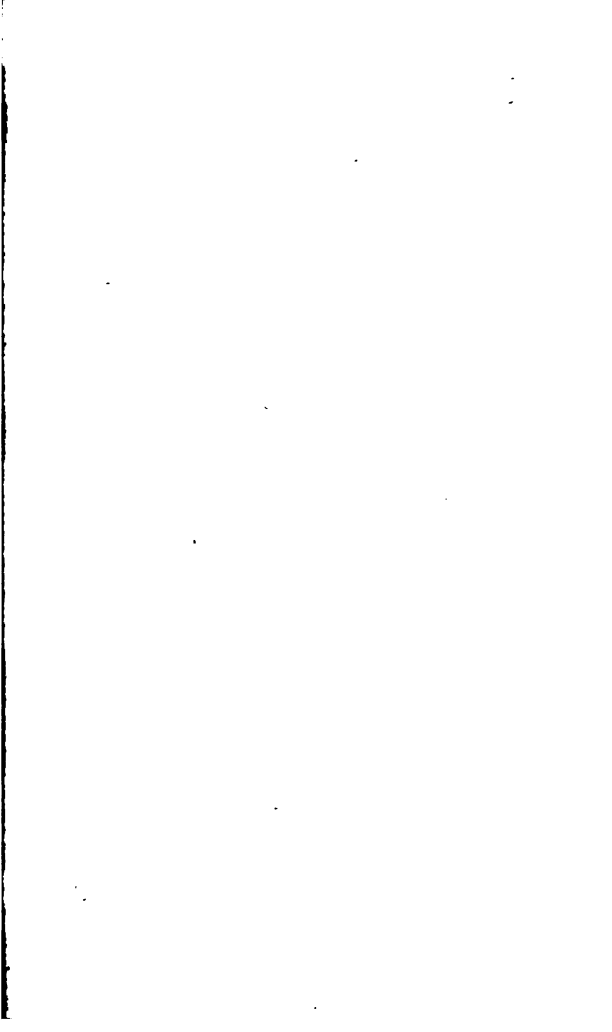
"Poor Aslauga!" said Agnes, in a low tone, to her mamma; "do n't you love her, mamma?—she was just like a fairy,—so small and so beautiful; and then she took such good care of her husband!" Mrs. Daleson smiled at the enthusiastic little Agnes, and only replied by pressing her lips upon the fair open forehead which had been raised inquiringly toward her.

"And are we really descended from those Northern invaders?" asked Margaret, of her father.

"I cannot trace out our genealogy so far back as the ninth century," replied Mr. Daleson; "but I have no doubt," added he, in a playful tone, "that the blood of the vikings still flows in our veins; for, as you will find on becoming better acquainted with their history, their surnames were usually formed by the addition of *son* to the name which had been borne by the head of a family, so that the Northern *Sagas* (or Stories) abound with such names as Johnson, Ericson, Stenson, Hallson, &c., &c., and we may therefore take it for granted that some warrior chief bore the name of Dale, although I cannot find it in the pages of Ara Frode or Snorro Thurleson. A more legitimate inference," continued he, "may however be drawn concerning our descent, from the fact, that this neighborhood was entirely colonized by the Norsemen in the ninth century; and the peaceful Saxons were either destroyed, or driven away from their own homes and hearths to the western part of England. But I see Agnes yawning, as if this discussion wearied her; and indeed my story has been longer than I intended."

“I only wish it were longer,” said Henry.  
“But will you not tell us another story of the Norsemen some other evening, papa?”

“Yes, with pleasure, if you desire it; but now let us draw near to the tea-table, where I see your mamma already seated.”





HAKON THE GOOD.

See page 65.



## Hakon the Good:

OR,

KING ATHELSTAN'S FOSTER-SON.

MR. AND MRS. DALESON'S children always looked forward to the evening as a very happy time; for they then enjoyed a pleasant fireside talk with their parents, who devoted an hour or so before tea to social intercourse with the young people. There were so many questions to be asked, and so much to be told, that the time passed away only too quickly.

It was about a week later than the period we have already been telling about, when Mr. Daleson having drawn his chair close to the fire, inquired of Henry, who had just closed his book, whether he had been reading any entertaining story.

"Not a story exactly, papa, but a famous history; the Life of Alfred the Great, and how he fought with the descendants of some of those heathen Norsemen you were telling

us about the other evening; and how he conquered them. Alfred was a great hero, was he not, papa?"

"Yes, truly; and he was also a good king, and a wise lawgiver: otherwise he would not, for all his victories, have lived in the hearts of Englishmen, as he does even to this day."

"I was rather amused," said Henry, "to read how, before his death, he invested his favorite little grandson, Athelstan, with the dignity of knighthood, although he was then scarcely six years old, and gave him 'a purple vestment, a jeweled belt, and a Saxon sword with a golden sheath.' The little fellow must have thought himself quite a man when thus accoutred."

"Only think," said Agnes, laughing, "how droll it would be to see even you, Henry, who are twice as old as Athelstane then was, with a sword dangling by your side!"

"In those barbarous times, however," observed Mr. Daleson, "there was nothing so ridiculous in the matter; for life being continually beset by danger, bravery was count-

ed the chief if not the only virtue, so that mere children were found fighting by their father's side; and it was no uncommon thing for a boy of twelve or thirteen to become a viking, and to assume the command of a ship."

"Pray, papa, what was a viking?" inquired Margaret.

"The vikings were pirates," replied her father, "who used to leave their homes early in the summer, and roam over the seas in quest of plunder. This occupation was deemed so honorable among the Norsemen, that 'no one,' we are told, 'was esteemed noble, no one was respected, who did not return in the winter to his home laden with booty.' There was but little security to be enjoyed at home in those days, especially for those who, like ourselves, dwelt within sight of the northern ocean. It was no uncommon thing for a family to be awakened out of their sleep at night by the shouts of pirates, who, after burning their habitation, would carry off its inmates as slaves, bearing away also their goods and cattle as lawful spoil. There was no mercy to be found

in the hearts of those vikings, who oftentimes, with wanton barbarity, murdered the weeping babes within their mothers' arms."

"And how," said Mrs. Daleson, "was this horrid system put an end to?"

"It lasted," replied her husband, "for a long while after the period of which we are now speaking; and we owe its final abandonment, as we do so many of our daily blessings, to the genial influence of Christianity. But I must return to Athelstan, who was deservedly a favorite of Alfred, to whom, in after life, he bore a strong resemblance, both in character and abilities. We are told that 'he was a favorite both among his own people and on the continent; that his people loved him for his bravery and humility; but his enemies feared his wrath.'<sup>\*</sup> Athelstan, moreover, was the founder of the English monarchy."

"Then how is it, papa, that in the book I have just been reading, Alfred is spoken of as the King of England?"

"This title has often been given to him," said Mr. Daleson; "but a careful reference

<sup>\*</sup> Malmesbury has given us this portrait.

to history will assure us that Alfred was only the first monarch of the *Anglo-Saxons*, while Athelstan was the first monarch of *England*. It was during his reign that the Danish kingdom of Northumbria was brought into subjection to the English crown. He also conquered Scotland and Wales, both of which, however, he restored to their legitimate sovereigns, observing that he 'would rather bestow kingdoms than enjoy them;' a noble saying, worthy of more civilized and enlightened times than those in which he lived. Among Athelstan's generous deeds, was his care of a Norwegian prince, the descendant of Ragnar Lodbrok and Aslauga, whose history I related to you only a few evenings ago."

On hearing the name of Aslauga, the little Agnes drew closer to her father, and said, "A descendant of Aslauga's! What was his name, papa?"

"Hakon was his name; and he was so much more amiable and good than his rude fellow-countrymen, that they called him Hakon the Good."

"I should like very much to hear some-

thing about him," said Agnes; "pray, papa, tell us his story."

A like wish being expressed by Margaret and Henry, Mr. Daleson promised to relate all he knew about him. "But," said he, "I must tell you first something about his parents, otherwise you could not fully understand Hakon's history.

"About the middle of the ninth century, (A. D. 853,) there was born a Norwegian king, (the descendant of Aslauga, daughter of Ragnar Lodbrok,) whose name was Harald Haarfager, so called from the beauty and abundance of his hair. He reigned only over the southern part of Norway, the northern portion being ruled by many petty kings, each of whom was independent in his own dominions. Harald would, in all probability, have remained satisfied with his own share of the country, but that he fell in love with a girl called Gyda, whom he sent to demand in marriage of her foster-father, in whose house she dwelt. Now, when the messengers came and delivered their errand to the girl, she, being of a very high spirit, answered that she would not throw herself

away, even to take a king for her husband, who had no greater kingdom to rule over than a few districts. 'And methinks,' said she, 'it is wonderful that no king here in Norway will make the whole country subject to him, in the same way that Gorm the Old did in Denmark, or Eric at Upsal.' The messengers thought her answer was very haughty, and gave her to understand that Harald was so mighty a man, that his invitation was good enough for her. They saw no chance, however, of taking her with them against her will; so they prepared to return. When they were about to depart, Gyda said to the messengers, 'Now tell to King Harald these my words,—I will only agree to be his lawful wife upon the condition that he shall first, for my sake, subject to himself the whole of Norway, so that he may rule over that kingdom as freely and as fully as King Eric did over the Swedish dominions, or King Gorm over Denmark; for then only can he be called the king of a people.'

"Now came the messengers back to King Harald, bringing him the words of the girl, and saying she was so bold and foolish

that she well deserved that the king should send a greater troop of people for her, and inflict on her some disgrace. Then answered the king, 'This girl has not spoken or done so much amiss, that she should be punished; but rather she should be thanked for her words. She has reminded me,' said he, 'of something which it appears to me wonderful that I did not think of before. And now,' added he, 'I make a solemn vow not to clip or comb my hair until I have subdued the whole of Norway, with scatt,<sup>o</sup> and duties, and domains; or, if not, have died in the attempt.'

"King Harald was as good as his word; for he went far and wide, and many were the battles he fought, until at length he subdued all the petty kingdoms in the country, and became the sole king of Norway. Indeed he was so absolute in his sway, that he imposed new burdens upon the land-owners, and insisted on their yielding him hom-

<sup>o</sup> Scatt was a land tax, paid to the king in money, malt, meal or flesh-meat, from all lands in his dominions, and was adjudged to him by the Thing on his accession.



age and doing him service for their lands, as was the custom in some other European countries. This was very displeasing to the Norwegians, who loved their liberty dearly; and a large body of them fled from the country, and, carrying with them their families and their goods, emigrated to Iceland, which was at that time uninhabited. Others among them went to the Orkney, Shetland, and Færøe Isles, which they peopled; and so, through the tyranny of Harald, these desolate countries became the homes of the noblest and proudest among the Norwegian families."

"And were these poor people happy in their new homes?" inquired Agnes.

"My dear child," replied Mr. Daleson, "it has been mercifully so ordered for human beings, that they soon become attached to any place which is their *home*; and although the Icelanders and their brother exiles seem always to have felt a lingering attachment to the land of their forefathers, yet they doubtless soon learned to love the countries wherein they had fixed their hearths and homes. It is somewhat singular that

the Icelanders appear, after their self-expatriation, to have formed very different tastes and habits from the other Norwegian emigrants. The former became skilled in commerce and learning, and among them were to be found most of the scalds, or poets, who frequented the different courts of Europe, where they were held in the highest estimation. The settlers in the Orkneys and Shetlands, on the contrary, were much addicted to piracy. Multitudes of them became vikings, infesting the northern seas, and oftentimes landing in Norway, plundered far and wide even into the heart of the country. This enraged King Harald so much, that he went to sea with many ships, and sailing southward to Orkney, made a great slaughter among its vikings, pursuing some of them to Scotland, and others to the Isle of Man, which, however, he found bare of people and goods, for the terror of his name caused all the inhabitants to desert their homes on his approach. So having sated his anger, he returned in peace to Norway. And now that he had become sole king of the land, he remembered what

that proud girl had said to him ; so he sent messengers to remind her of her promise, and she accompanied them back and became his queen. He had many other wives, as was usual with the heathen kings ; and he had a great many sons, who grew up to be violent and headstrong men. When King Harald was about fifty years of age, they quarreled together about precedence and power. So he called together a Thing, (a sort of popular parliament,) and in presence of his assembled people he divided a great part of his dominions among his sons, and gave to each of them the title of king, reserving to himself half of the revenues, together with the supreme power over their territories. But these concessions failed to satisfy his sons, who, thinking their own possessions too small, equipped ships and swept the seas in quest of spoil. Two of them more especially, Thorgil and Frode, were so unmanageable, that their father was glad to get rid of them by giving them war-ships, with which they went westward, and committed great ravages in Scotland and Ireland. Thus they became sea-kings,

having ships for their castles, and the waves for their domain."

"Had they no other kingdom but the sea?" inquired Margaret. "How very strange that must have been!"

"They would not be called kings in our days," observed Henry, smiling.

"No," replied his father, "it requires a good solid territory to constitute a kingdom now-a-days: but it was not so in the tenth century, of which we are now speaking. When a king of Denmark or Norway, for instance, had many sons, some of them usually became sea-kings; a race of beings whom Europe beheld with horror. Without an acre of territory, without towns or castles, with no wealth but their ships, no force but their crews, and no hope but from their swords, these sea-kings carried terror into every district that they approached. 'Never to sleep under a smoky roof, nor to indulge in the cheerful cup over a hearth,' were the usual boasts of these ocean sovereigns. Some of them, however, enlisted so many followers, that they subdued provinces for the purpose of reigning over them. Thus

it was with Frode and Thorgil, who conquered part of the eastern coast of Ireland, and Thorgil was for a long time king of Dublin; but at length he was slain by the natives, who hated their northern rulers.

Harald Haarfager, having thus disposed of his unruly children, spent his time chiefly at some of his great farms; for he had no castles, or palaces, like the kings of England, but only large wooden houses in different parts of his dominions, wherein he dwelt occasionally, according as business or pleasure drew him to the neighborhood. While staying at one of these farm-houses, he became acquainted with a girl of good family, named Thora Mosterstany, whom he married, although he was then seventy years of age, and had other wives."

"And were they all queens?" inquired Margaret.

"No," replied Mr. Daleson: "one only among them was called queen, and the others were inferior to her in rank and dignity. Thora was sailing along the coast with her husband, when she was taken suddenly so ill, that they put her on shore

among the rocks, where, in a rude but sheltered nook, she gave birth to a son. The boy was named Hakon, and grew so handsome and so like his father, that the old king loved him dearly.

"Now it was the fashion of those times for kings and great men to choose for their children foster-fathers, to whose care they were committed during their early youth, so that a mutual affection might be formed between them. This bond was of the strongest and most lasting nature; and it frequently happened that after the death of their parents, children were watched over by their foster-fathers with as much tenderness as if they had been their own offspring. You may remember," continued Mr. Daleson, turning to Agnes, "how fondly your favorite Aslauga was nurtured under similar circumstances by her foster-father."

"Ah, yes," replied the little girl, brightening up at the mention of Aslauga; "she, indeed, had a kind foster-father. But who was Hakon's foster-father, papa?"

"I was just about to tell you, my dear," replied her father. "At that time, the

great and good king Athelstan was reigning as monarch over all England, and was held in such esteem among neighboring princes, that many of them sent their sons to be educated at his court. Among these were Alain of Brittany, and Louis of France. It seems that Athelstan in his early years had visited Denmark, and made acquaintance there with Harald Haarfager, for whom he conceived a great respect, and whom he ever after regarded with friendly feelings. Harald, hearing of the English king's renown, bethought himself of sending his favorite son to the court of Athelstan, and committing him to the monarch's fostering care. Accordingly he dispatched the child, with a noble retinue, across the sea; and it so happened that he arrived in London on a day when King Athelstan was entertaining his people at a grand feast in that royal city. He bade the Norwegians welcome to his banquet-hall; and, on learning their errand, he placed Hakon upon his knee, signifying thereby, according to the custom of those times, his adoption of the boy as his foster-son. Then the messengers

sent y Harald presented to Athelstan his gift, which consisted of 'a magnificent ship with a golden beak and rich purple sails, the deck being surrounded with shields, which were so richly gilt that they gleamed like fire in the sun.' A right royal gift, and one that was most acceptable to Athelstan, as he, like his grandfather Alfred, was very anxious to improve and strengthen his navy. King Athelstan had Hakon baptized, and brought up in the Christian faith, and in good habits, and he caused him to be instructed likewise in every becoming accomplishment. The king, it is said, loved him above all his relations; and Hakon, on his part, repaid his royal foster-father's care by excelling in all his exercises and studies. He was also handsome, and of noble aspect; his manners were pleasing and popular, so that, as we are told by an old historian, 'he was beloved of all men.' When he was about fifteen years of age, news came of his father's death, and of the fierce quarrels between his brothers, from whose tyranny the Norwegian people besought Hakon to come and deliver them.



The young prince was not slow in obeying the summons; and Athelstan bade him God-speed in his undertaking, giving him a sword of which the hilt and handle were gold, and the blade still better, for with it Hakon cut down a millstone to the center eye, and the sword thereafter was called the Quernbiter. Hakon carried it to his dying day. Athelstan also provided his pupil with a well-equipped fleet, and many brave warriors; and with these he sailed to Drontheim. The people there welcomed him with joy; and a great Thing being gathered together, he offered himself to them as king, promising to restore to them the rights of which they had been deprived by his father. This speech met with such applause that it seemed as though the whole assembly were shouting with one voice that they would take him to be their king. The young admired him for his beauty and manly bearing; the old praised him for his resemblance to his father, saying the one to the other, 'Harald Haarfager is come again and grown young.' The news of his appearance at Drontheim, and of his promises, passed from mouth to

mouth—it flew like fire in dry grass, through the whole land, and people came from all parts to meet King Hakon, while others sent him messages and tokens, and all to the same effect,—that his men they would be; and the king received all thankfully.

“Hakon no sooner found himself firmly seated on the Norwegian throne, than he set himself to oppose a large band of Danish vikings who were plundering and ravaging his coasts. He pursued them into Jutland, and routed them in a great battle, in which he fought so boldly that he went forward before his banner without helmet or coat of mail, whereon Guttorm, the scald, sang as follows:—

“ ‘Hakon the Brave, whose skill all know  
To bend in battle-storm the bow,  
Rush’d o’er the waves to Sealand’s tongue,  
His twelve war-ships with gilt shields hung:

o            o            o            o            o            o

Furrowing the deep blue sea with oars,  
The king pursues to Jutland’s shores.  
They met; and in the battle-storm  
Of clashing shields, full many a form  
Of goodly warrior, on the plain  
Fell, by the hand of Hakon slain.’

"So far all had gone smoothly with Hakon since his arrival in Norway; but a grave cause of dispute now arose between him and his people. He was a Christian on his arrival in Norway, and they were heathens; so, by way of conciliating them, he at first practiced his religious observances in private; but he kept Sunday holy, and also the Church festivals. He made a law, likewise, that the Yule festival, which had heretofore begun on mid-winter night, should be celebrated on the 25th of December, hoping thus to prepare the way for the celebration of Christmas."

"I do not know what the Yule festival means," observed Margaret; "pray, papa, will you be so kind as to tell me?"

"Yes, my child, I will gladly explain it to you," replied her father. "Yule was one of the three great festivals which were held annually by the pagan northmen. It was held at mid-winter in honor of Odin, one of whose names was Yiolner. It lasted three days, and was a scene of feasting and merry-making, as well as of sacrifice. Bullocks and horses were slain, and then offered up

to Odin, by way of securing victory for the king, and a season of plenty and prosperity to the people. Afterwards the flesh was boiled and eaten. The partaking of horse-flesh at those festivals seems to have been commemorative of their Asiatic forefathers, and was regarded as one of the most decided tests of paganism. They also drank goblets of ale in honor of their gods, and emptied one, called 'the remembrance-goblet,' to the memory of departed friends. The quaffing of ale was so essential a part of the business, that Hakon in fixing upon Christmas for the time of the Yule<sup>o</sup> festival commanded also that 'every man should at that time brew a meal of malt, and therewith keep the Yule holy as long as it lasted.'

"This was a singular device of Hakon's," observed Mrs. Daleson, "and I am rather curious to know the effect of so questionable a proceeding."

"It was just what might have been expected," replied her husband; "it annoyed and irritated his people, without doing them

<sup>o</sup> In Scotland, as well as in Scandinavia, Yule is the name which is still given to the Christmas holydays.

any good. Christianity is so pure, and holy, and true, that it cannot enter into the hearts of men by being mingled with error and wickedness such as abounded in the pagan rites. Yet Hakon was a sincere and an earnest man, but he lived in dark and troubled times ; let us, therefore, instead of judging him too severely, bless God that we are born in happier days, when the light of his holy gospel is shining clearly in the world around us. I must now tell you how it fared with him in his difficulties. He first endeavored to convert the men who were dearest to him ; and many out of friendship to him allowed themselves to be baptized, and laid aside sacrifices. He then sent to England for a bishop and other clergymen ; and when they arrived in Norway, Hakon resolved to proclaim Christianity over all the land. With this view he attended a Thing at Drontheim, where were assembled a vast multitude of people ; and when the Thing was seated, the king spoke to the people, and began his speech with saying, it was his message and entreaty to all those who were present, as well as to the whole

people of the kingdom, great and small, rich and poor, women as well as men, that they should all allow themselves to be baptized, and should believe in one God, and in Christ, the Son of Mary, and refrain from all sacrifices to heathen gods, and should keep Sunday holy, and abstain from all work upon it, and fast upon the seventh day. As soon as the king had proposed this to the people, great was the noise and murmuring among them. Some complained that the king wanted to take their labor and their old faith from them, and the land could not be cultivated in that way. The laboring men and slaves said that they could not work if they did not get meat; and so there was a great buzz among the crowd, and at length there stood up an aged man named Asbiom, who answered thus the king's proposal:—

“ ‘We Bonders,<sup>o</sup> King Hakon, when we elected thee to be our king, and got back our udal rights at the Thing held in Drontheim, thought we had got into heaven;

<sup>o</sup> The Bonders were the peasant proprietors of the soil, and were often men of great wealth and power.

but now we don't know whether we have really got back our freedom, or whether thou wishest to make vassals of us again by this extraordinary proposal, that we should abandon the ancient faith which our fathers and forefathers have held from the oldest times, even in those times when the dead were burnt, as well as since that they are laid under mounds, and which, although they were braver than the people of our days, has served us as a faith to the present time. We have also held thee so dear, that we have allowed thee to rule and give law to all the country; and even now, we Bonders will unanimously hold by the laws thou hast given us, and to which we have also given *our Yea*, and we will follow thee, and have thee for our king, as long as there is a living man among us Bonders here assembled. But thou, king, must use moderation toward us, and only require from us such things as we can obey thee in, and are not impossible for us. If, however, thou wilt take up this matter with a high hand, and wilt try thy power and strength against us, we Bonders have resolved among ourselves

to part with thee, and to take to ourselves some other chief, who will suffer us freely and safely to enjoy that faith that suits our own inclinations. Now, king, thou must choose one or other of these conditions before the Thing is ended.'

"The Bonders gave loud applause to this speech, saying that it expressed their wishes, and they would stand or fall by what had been spoken.

"Now there happened to be present at the Thing, Earl Sigurd, one of the most powerful men in Norway, who had been the dearest friend of Harald Haarfager, and who, although a pagan, was warmly attached to King Hakon. He was very anxious to secure for Hakon the good-will of his subjects; so, as soon as silence was restored, Earl Sigurd rose up, and said, 'It is King Hakon's will to give way to you, Bonders, and never to separate himself from your friendship.' The Bonders replied, that it was their desire that the king should offer a sacrifice for peace and a good year, as his father was wont to do; and so they departed. Earl Sigurd afterward besought



the king not to refuse altogether to do as the people desired, advising him to give way for the present to the Bonders; 'Hereafter,' said he, 'you may find a good way to manage them.' And so the king consented to their wishes.

"The harvest festival next came on; and, as usual, a great crowd of people came together for its celebration. It had heretofore been Hakon's custom, when he was present at a place where there was sacrifice, to take his meals in a house by himself, or with a few of his men who were Christians; but the Bonders grumbled because he did not seat himself on his throne at these joyous meetings of the people. Earl Sigurd promised that the king should do so this time. Hakon, accordingly, sat upon his throne. Now when the first goblet was filled, Earl Sigurd blessed it in Odin's name, and drank to the king out of the horn, and the king then took it, and made the sign of the cross over it.

"'What does the king mean by that?' inquired one of the Bonders angrily; 'will he not sacrifice?' Earl Sigurd replies,

‘The king is blessing the full goblet in the name of Thor, by making the sign of his hammer over it before he drinks it.’ After this the evening passed over quietly. The next day, when the people sat down to table, the Bonders pressed the king to eat horseflesh; and as he would on no account do so, they insisted that he should at least taste the gravy; and on his refusal they were going to lay hands upon him. Earl Sigurd came and made peace among them by asking the king to hold his mouth over the handle of the kettle upon which the steam of the horseflesh had rested; and the king, having first laid a linen cloth over the handle, then opened his mouth over it, and returned to the throne; but neither party was satisfied with this.

“When the festival was over, eight of the heathen Bonders bound themselves together by an oath, four of them to root Christianity out of the land, and four others to oblige the king to offer sacrifice to the gods. Now when the month of December had arrived, Hakon prepared a Yule feast in the town of Möre, and these eight chiefs resolved to

meet together at it. A few days before the festival they went with their followers to Møre, where they killed three priests, and burned three churches; and on King Hakon's arrival with his court they immediately insisted on his offering sacrifice, threatening him with violence if he refused. Hakon at first steadily refused, but at length Earl Sigurd so far prevailed as to get him to taste a bit of horse liver, and to empty one of the horns which the Bonders had filled for him. As soon as the feast was over, however, he went away angry and displeased, vowing that he would repay the Bonders for their enmity to him and his faith. So he withdrew into another part of the country."

"What wicked people those Bonders were!" said Agnes to her father; "poor Hakon was very much to be pitied among them, I think."

"But surely," observed Margaret, "he ought to have done his duty in spite of their threats."

"For my part," said Henry, "I think it was very cowardly of him to give way to them. Don't you think so, papa?"

“It could not have been mere cowardice that induced him to do so, for he was a very brave man; it seems far more likely that he was persuaded by Sigurd that it was both his duty and interest to give way for a while to the prejudices of his subjects. A grievous mistake this, and one of which he afterward repented.

“As for King Hakon, he was full of displeasure at what had happened, and was forming plans for the punishment of his Bonders, as well as for the establishment of Christianity among his people, when news came that a large body of invaders had landed in the south of Norway, and were plundering and ravaging the country. Immediately King Hakon and his rebellious Bonders forgot all their feuds, and they advanced boldly together against the enemy. A great battle ensued, in which Hakon routed his foes, and cast down their chieftain Guttorm as he was flying to take refuge on board his ship. Part of the song which was sung upon that occasion has been handed down to us. I will repeat the closing lines of it to you:—

“ ‘The king’s voice waked the silent host  
Who slept beside the wild sea-coast,  
And bade the song of spear and sword  
Over the battle plain be heard.  
Where heroes’ shields the loudest rang,  
Where loudest was the sword-blade’s clang,  
By the sea-shore at Kormt Sound,  
Hakon felled Guttorm to the ground.’

“King Hakon after this battle made a law that all the land along the sea-coast, and as far back from it as the salmon swim up the rivers, should be divided into ship-raths, according to the districts; and it was fixed by law how many ships there should be from each district, when the whole people were called out on service. Beacons were also erected upon the hills, so that every man could see from one to the other; and we are told that a war-signal could thus be given in seven days from the most southerly beacon to the most northern town in the land. This was looked upon as a wonder in those days, although in our times we would regard it as a very slow means of communication. By way, also, of preventing all needless fear among his people, King Hakon imposed a heavy penalty upon any

one who should give a false alarm, by lighting the beacons without cause.

“In spite of all Hakon’s precautions, his kingdom was occasionally harassed by viking attacks; but on the whole, during his reign, Norway enjoyed peace and plenty, and he himself was greatly beloved by his people.

“He had now reigned about five and twenty years, when one day, as he was partaking of a feast given by one of his Bonders, named Fitlar, it happened that his watchmen, who were outside, observed many ships approaching from the south, and not very far from land. One said that the king ought to be informed of this; another said that he did not choose to give an alarm, lest it should prove to be a false one. So they agreed to call out of the supper-room a brave man, and a friend of Hakon’s, whose name was Eyvind Finnson. Eyvind, on seeing the ships, perceived that a great army was on the way; so he returned hastily into the room, and approaching the king, said, ‘Short is the hour for acting, and long the hour for feasting.’

"The king cast his eyes upon him, and said, 'What now is in the way?'

"Eyvind answered—

"Up, king! the avengers are at hand!

Eric's bold sons approach the land!

Right well I know 't is no light thing

To bring war tidings to the king,

And tell him 't is no time to rest.

Up! gird your armor to your breast:

Thy honor's dearer than my life!

Therefore I say, Up to the strife!

"Thou art too brave a fellow, Eyvind, to bring us any false alarm of war,' said the king, who forthwith went out to look at the ships; and perceiving that there was a very large force, while he had but few men comparatively near him, he called his people together, and asked them whether they chose to give battle, or to sail away northward from the foe.

"They answered, that they would 'rather fall bravely, and like men, than fly before the Danes;' adding, that they had 'often gained the victory against greater odds of numbers.'

"The king thanked them for their resolution, and bade them arm themselves; and

all the men did so. The king put on his armor, and girded on his sword Quernbiter, and put a gilt helmet upon his head, and took a spear in his hand, and a shield by his side. He then drew up his men in one body, and set up his banner. The invaders quickly landed, and it then appeared that they were as six to one in comparison of Hakon's men. But the king had a gallant band around him, and they advanced boldly to meet the foe. King Hakon went in advance of the banner, and his helmet glanced so brightly in the sun that he was very conspicuous in the fray, and many weapons were directed against him. This being observed by the faithful Eyvind, he took a hat and put it over the king's helmet, so that one of the Danish chieftains cried out, 'Does the king of the Norsemen hide himself, or has he fled? Where is now the golden helmet?'

"Hakon, casting aside the friendly shade, replied, 'Come on! come on! and ye shall find the king of the Norsemen.'

"On came the chief, brandishing his sword, and making a cut at the king; but



Hakon seizing his good sword Quernbiter with both hands, hewed his antagonist to the ground. Fear now came over the invading army, and the men fled away to their ships, some rushing into the water to escape from their pursuers.

"At this moment of victory and triumph an arrow pierced the king's shoulder, which was bound up on his return from the field of battle; but the blood flowed from it so rapidly that his strength began to fail him. Feeling that his life was ebbing away, he called his friends around him, and, after having commended to their care his only child, a daughter, named Thora, told them what he wished to be done with regard to his kingdom; 'for,' added he, 'even if my life should be prolonged, I intend to leave my country and go to a Christian land, where I can serve God, and do penance for what I have done against him.'

"Shortly afterward Hakon expired on a little hill, close to the very spot on the sea-shore where he had first drawn the breath of life. From that day the hill was called after his name; and even to the present

time it bears the appellation of Hakhella or Hakon's hill. So great and general was the sorrow at Hakon's death, that he was lamented both by friends and foes; and they said that never again would Norway see such a king. His body was borne to the neighborhood of Bergen, and a great mound being raised to his honor, he was laid therein, arrayed in his richest garments. The people spoke over his grave as heathen people were wont to do; and his favorite scald composed a poem on his death, reciting his many glorious deeds, and telling how well he was received in Walhalla. A far nobler tribute, however, was raised to Hakon in the affectionate remembrance of his people; as also in the fact that, after a lapse of nine centuries, his title still survives—'HAKON THE GOOD.' "

"Can you tell us, papa, what became of Norway after Hakon's death?" inquired Margaret.

"It was governed for a while by his nephews, the sons of Eric and Gunhilda; and through their tyranny and quarrels its condition became very miserable. One of

their near relations, King Tryggvesson, of the Uplands, having tried to oppose them, was treacherously put to death. The history of his wife and infant son were so singular and so eventful, that I would feel inclined to tell it to you now, only that my story has already been longer than I had intended; so you must wait until some other evening for the Story of Astrid and Olaf."

## The Story of Queen Astrid and her Son.

"Now we are going to hear about Astrid and Olaf," said Agnes, as she saw her father seat himself in what she called his "Story-telling-Chair."

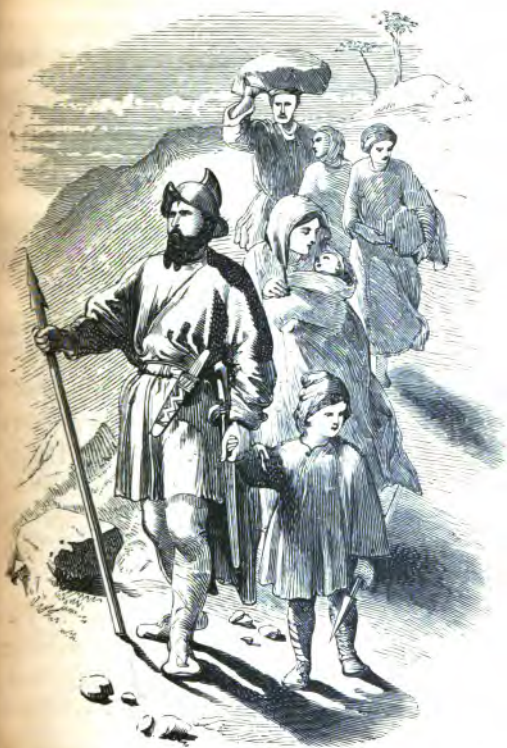
"I hope Olaf was a warrior," observed Henry, "for I like to hear of dangers and of battles."

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Daleson, "as if all the men in those days were warriors."

"You are not very wrong in thinking so," replied her husband, "for war was the very element of their lives. As for Olaf Tryggvesson,<sup>o</sup> (such is the name of our hero to-night,) you must, after having heard his story, judge for yourself of his merits, both as a man and as a warrior.

"Twilight was falling fast upon the Uplands of Norway one fine spring evening about 880 years ago. The day had been bright and warm,—one of those northern

<sup>o</sup> Signifying, Olaf the son of Tryggve, according to the usual formation of surnames at that time in the north of Europe.



QUEEN ASTRID AND HER SON.

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spring days, in which nature seems to wake up joyously from its winter sleep, and to burst suddenly into life and beauty: but now, evening was closing rapidly in upon this district of hills, lakes, and forests, and a small party of people might have been seen slowly winding their way down a mountain path, which was sometimes bare and rocky, sometimes sheltered by tall dark firs which grew thickly along the mountain side. Foremost came a middle-aged man, of noble aspect, holding by the hand a boy of six or seven years old. Close behind him followed a young woman, wrapped up in a woolen cloak, and bearing in her arms a little infant, upon whom she gazed every now and then with looks of fondness and anxiety. Two country-looking damsels and a serving man followed, carrying sundry things which were needful for the infant and its mother.

“As the travelers made a sudden turn in the path, they beheld a broad lake stretched out at their feet, in the midst of which lay an islet, fringed around its edges by tall reeds; while within there stood, clustering together, the hazel and birch, min-

gled with low and tangled shrubs, which formed a thicket of budding foliage.

“‘Yonder,’ said the foremost traveler, turning to the lady behind him,—‘yonder we shall find a shelter for thee and for thy son, until thy pursuers have ceased from their search.’

‘O! if Olaf is but safe, I care not where may be my hiding-place,’ replied Astrid.

“‘But for thee, Thoralf, we should both assuredly have fallen into the hands of the cruel Gunhild and her sons.’

“‘Art thou not my foster-daughter?’ was Thoralf’s only reply, as he looked kindly upon the mother and her babe.

● He then advanced toward the lake, at a spot where it was overshadowed by the drooping branches of an ash-tree, and drawing out from amid the tangled boughs a small boat, placed his companions in it, and seated himself at the helm; they then quickly sped their way toward the island.

“In the very heart of the copse had been prepared a wooden hut for Astrid, and there she passed the summer, nursing her little one, and carefully watched over by her



foster-father and faithful attendants. But when the days began to shorten, and the weather to grow cold, poor Astrid found her retreat so cheerless that she longed for a more comfortable dwelling. Accordingly, Thoralf, having ascertained that her pursuers had, on the approach of winter, returned to their homes, resolved to venture out of his hiding-place, and to take refuge with her father, who was a wealthy man, dwelling at Ofrostad. They were kindly welcomed at his house, and spent the winter there in peace. The following spring, however, Gunhild renewed her pursuit; and one evening in April, as Astrid was lying down to rest, she learned that a troop of thirty armed men on horseback were approaching the place to seize her and Olaf, and carry them prisoners to Gunhild."

"You have not told us yet, papa, who was this cruel Gunhild," said Margaret; "or why she persecuted Astrid in that way."

"This was an omission on my part," replied her father, "and I am glad that you have made the inquiry; so now I will tell you that Gunhild was a Lapland woman of

great beauty, but of an imperious and cruel temper. Having early in life been married to Eric, (Harald Haarfager's eldest son,) who, on his expulsion from Norway, successfully invaded Northumbria, she accompanied her husband to this country, and passed some years in this part of England, where Eric died. On the death of Hakon the Good, her sons shared among them the dominion of Norway, and she, returning with them, incited them to cruelty and revenge. Hence was she called '*The King Mother.*' The cause of her hatred of Astrid and her son was, that the latter, being a great-grandchild of Harald Haarfager's, had some pretensions to the throne of Norway."

● "O papa!" exclaimed Agnes; "I hope that Astrid and Olaf did not fall into the hands of this wicked woman."

"No, my dear, they did not; for as soon as these bad tidings arrived, Astrid's father immediately made preparations for her flight, and giving her money and guides, sent her off that night eastward to Sweden, where he had a kind friend named Hakon Gamle, who was a powerful man there, and

who had promised to take care of her and her son.

“Gunhild’s men, on arriving at Ofrostad, were much enraged to find that their prey had escaped them ; but they spent most of the following day in searching for her throughout the neighborhood. At last they bethought themselves that she must have gone toward Sweden, and they followed in the very same track she had taken. Meanwhile, Astrid, after having traveled the whole day, ventured toward evening to approach a large mansion, and to ask for a night’s lodging. The owner of the house, Biorn, was very rich, but proud and inhospitable ; and Astrid having, for the sake of concealment, put on mean clothing, he drove her away from his door. This was a sore disappointment to Astrid, as she and her little one greatly needed rest and refreshment, and there was no inn for them to go to : however, it proved in her case, as it continually does in the lives of others, that the circumstance which she deemed untoward, was the best that could have happened to her. She and her companions having gone

a little further, were kindly received at another house, whose master, Thorstein, gave them good lodgings and hospitable entertainment. The hard-hearted Biorn, on the same night, was awoke out of his sleep by Gunhild's messengers, who without ceremony took up their quarters at his house, and demanded whether he knew anything about Astrid and her son. Biorn replied, that some people had been there in the evening wanting lodgings; 'but,' said he, 'I drove them away, and I suppose they are gone to some of the neighboring houses.'

"As they were talking thus, one of Thorstein's laborers chanced to pass by on his way from the forest where he had been at work. Hearing what was said, he went to his master, and told him of it. Thorstein wakened his guests, and told them that Gunhild's men were upon their track. They entreated him to help them, and he gave them a guide and some provisions. They were conducted through the forest to a lake, in which there was an islet overgrown with reeds, and after wading across to it, they

and the guide concealed themselves among the reeds.

“ You may imagine what an anxious day was passed by Astrid in this retreat. Her child was yet too young to feel the necessity of being still and quiet, and she dreaded lest his infantine voice should betray the secret of their hiding-place. Happily, however, it was not so : for Thorstein, her host of the preceding evening, having undertaken to guide her pursuers through the forest, led them by another track, and having vainly sought for her in every direction, they returned to Gunhild, and acquainted her with their ill success. The worthy Thorstein having thus saved them from their foes, sent them on their way to Sweden, where they received a friendly welcome from Hakon Gamle, with whom they remained a long time. Gunhild was enraged at their escape, and made repeated endeavors, both by stratagem and violence, to get them into her power. At length Astrid became alarmed at these frequent attempts, and resolved to travel into Russia, where she had a brother named Sigurd,

who was a wealthy merchant, and was held in great consideration by King Valdemar. Hakon Gamle having provided her with good attendants and all that was needful for the voyage, she sailed in company with some merchants ; taking with her the little Olaf, who was then three years old, and having for companions her faithful foster-father Thoralf, and his son Thorkils. As they sailed out into the Baltic, the vessel was attacked and captured by vikings of Esthonia, who took all on board prisoners, some of whom they killed, and others they treated as slaves. Astrid would have regarded this misfortune as less terrible, if her child had not been taken from her by the pirates : but so it was ; for they fell to the share of different masters. Olaf, however, was not left alone among strangers, for Thoralf and Thorkils belonged to the same man as himself. Their master was an Esthonian, named Klaerkon, a cruel man ; for having found that Thoralf was infirm and unfit for work, he killed him.

“Although Olaf was still almost an infant, his blood boiled within him at seeing

his mother's foster-father murdered thus in cold blood; but his childish anger was of no avail. Happily for him, he and Thorkils were soon afterward sold to a man named Reas, who gave a ram in exchange for the two boys. Olaf passed six years with this man, who treated him well, and he was much beloved by the whole family. It was nevertheless a joyous moment to him, when one day happening to be in the market-place, and seeing a man of consequence enter it with many followers and great magnificence, this personage, after gazing awhile upon Olaf, beckoned him over to him, and asked him his name and family. Olaf answered all his questions, and related minutely his adventures. The great man desired him to follow him to the peasant Reas, from whom he bought both the boys, and taking them with him to Novogorod, (which was then the capital of Russia,) treated them with the greatest kindness. This was no other than Sigurd, Astrid's brother, who had been sent by Valdomar into Esthonia, to collect the king's taxes and rents; and observing a remarkably

handsome boy, who was evidently a foreigner, he felt insensibly drawn toward him, and thus became the protector of his sister's son.

“Olaf remained at Novogorod under his uncle's roof, where he was treated with the utmost kindness and distinction; but the happiness of his present lot could not make him forget the dear companions of his captivity, of which he gave a curious proof; for one day, as he was passing through the market-place, he espied among the crowd of Esthonian peasants, Klaerkon, who, you may remember, had killed his mother's foster-father, Thoralf. Olaf had a little ax in his hand, with which he dealt so heavy a blow at Klaerkon, that the latter fell lifeless to the ground. Olaf immediately hastened home and told his uncle what he had done. Sigurd, knowing that human life was much more respected in Russia than in Norway, and that the law never admitted of any man being slain who had put another to death, without judgment having been passed upon him, felt afraid that his nephew would be sacrificed to popular fury. So he instantly



conducted Olaf to Queen Allogia's house, told her what had happened, and besought her protection for the boy. The queen was so charmed with his appearance that she at once promised to take care of him, and ordered her guard to be drawn out fully armed. The people hearing he had taken refuge in the palace, assembled in a crowd and threatened to storm it. The king, on learning what had occurred, hastened to the spot, and said he would allow no bloodshed, but imposed a large fine on Olaf for the murder. The queen then presented him to the king, entreating him to befriend the king's son whose fate had been so hard. Valdomar, in compliance with her wishes, received Olaf into his court.

"Olaf remained at the court of Novogorod for nine years, during which time he grew into favor not only with the queen, but also with King Valdomar, who esteemed him so highly, that he gave him the command of a fleet which he sent out to defend his dominions in the Baltic. Olaf gained several battles, and being of an open-handed nature, was very popular among his men:

but the nobles of Russia became envious of him, and hinted to the king that he should take care not to make Olaf too powerful,—‘for,’ said they, ‘such a man may become dangerous to you, if he were to allow himself to be won over by your enemies, as he is not only very expert in all exercises and feats, but also extremely popular among the people.’

“Although Valdomar did not believe all they said, yet he listened to their speeches, and became gradually reserved toward Olaf. The youth perceiving this, told the queen; and also that he had a great desire to travel to the northern land where his family had formerly great power and possessions. The queen wished him a prosperous journey, and said he would be found a brave man wherever he might be. So Olaf bade her farewell, and soon afterward quit-  
ted Russia. Nor was his departure unsung by the poets of that country; for one of them says:—

“‘The Russian cutters start from land,  
Under the generous chief’s command,—  
Out to the open sea they run,  
Under the gallant Tryggve’s son;

And ranging all the western coast,  
Olaf the brave, who led the host,  
Made many a sturdy foeman feel  
The sharp edge of his biting steel.'

"While Olaf was sailing down the Baltic, there came on a violent storm, which drove him southward to the coast of Vendland, where he found a good harbor, and remained there some time."

"Papa! where is Vendland?" inquired Margaret. "I do not remember any country of that name on the Baltic."

"Vendland," replied her father, "was the land of the Vends, or Vands, a people who then occupied the coast from the Vistula to Holstein. It is the present Mecklenburgh, Pomerania, and East Prussia. There reigned at that time in Vendland a king, named Burislaf, who had three daughters, to each of whom he assigned part of his dominions, reserving to himself the supreme sovereignty over all. The youngest of these, Geyra, ruled that part of the coast where Olaf had landed; and learning that some strangers of distinguished appearance had visited her coast, and conducted themselves peaceably, she sent them a courteous message, saying

that the season was so far advanced and the weather so severe and stormy, that she hoped they would take up their winter abode with her. Olaf willingly accepted the invitation, and, on becoming acquainted with Queen Geyra, liked her exceedingly. She, on her side, was equally pleased with her guest: and so it ended by their being married, and Olaf became ruler, along with Queen Geyra, over her dominions. They were very happy together; but Olaf was too true a Norseman to remain satisfied with an inactive life. He first turned his arms against some baronies in Vendland which had rebelled against Queen Geyra, and, after reducing them all to obedience, he returned to his castle in peace. Shortly afterward he joined his father-in-law, King Burislaf, and the Emperor Otto, in an expedition against Denmark, during which he distinguished himself much, more especially at a hard-fought battle near Schleswig, upon which occasion, we are told that

“Thick the storm of arrows flew,  
Loud was the din and dark the view  
Of close array of shield and spear  
Of Vend and Frank and Saxon there.

But little reck'd our gallant men ;  
And loud the cry resounded then  
Of Norway's brave sea-roving son,—  
“ On 'gainst the foe ! On ! lead us on ! ”

“ When Olaf Tryggvesson had been three years in Vendland, his queen fell sick and died. The loss of Queen Geyra afflicted him so much, that he had no longer any pleasure in Vendland. He soon after provided himself with war ships, and set out on a viking expedition, plundering first in Friesland, and then in Flanders. Afterward he sailed to England, and ravaged the country far and wide, first in Northumberland, then in Scotland, Ireland, and finally on the coast of Cornwall.

“ England was at this time governed by a king who, from his weak and vacillating character, was called ‘ *The Unready*.’ Etheldred the Unready, while idly dreaming away his time, suffered his people to be plundered and destroyed by the Northmen, who, after having drained the country, marched with their booty in triumph to their ships, singing their savage songs of joy in honor of Odin and Thor, or of Ragnar Lodbrok and

his adventurous sons. While Olaf was in Cornwall he heard of a wise man, who dwelled on one of the Scilly Isles, and who was famous throughout that part of the country not only for his goodness and beneficence, but also for his clearsightedness in reading the course of human events;—a faculty which won for him among the ignorant multitude the character of a prophet, or seer. The Norseman's curiosity was excited by these reports, and he resolved to become acquainted with the wise man, and to judge for himself how far he deserved the praises which were bestowed upon him. He accordingly sought him out in his lonely and sea-girt hermitage, where he was kindly received by the Christian teacher,—for such was the real character of the recluse. Whether Olaf here acquired the earthly lore he courted we know not; but a far higher and more precious knowledge was imparted to him by the hermit, who declared to him the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ the Son of God, and exhorted him not to 'neglect so great salvation.' The heathen warrior listened with eagerness to

the good man's words, and, after due instruction, was baptized into the Christian faith. The greater number of his followers were at the same time induced to make the like holy profession.

"On Olaf's return to the mainland, a curious adventure happened to him. He landed on the coast in a peaceful manner, without any warlike intention, and, observing a crowd of people, inquired what they were about. It was told him in reply, that an Irish princess named Gyda, having married an English earl in that neighborhood, and having become a widow, many suitors had presented themselves to her; and so pressing were their importunities, that she had promised to attend this meeting and to choose a husband from among those who should be present there. Olaf stood with his people apart from the crowd, to see how the matter would end. After a while there approached a young and handsome woman with many attendants; this was the Princess Gyda. She went slowly round the circle, and, on perceiving Olaf, inquired who he was.

“‘I am Olaf,’ was his reply; ‘and I am a stranger here.’

“‘Wilt thou have me if I choose thee?’ asked the lady.

“‘I will not say nay to that,’ replied the adventurous Norseman.

“And so it ended in the marriage of Olaf and Gyda; and after living awhile with her in England, he accompanied her to Ireland, where he joined in many warlike expeditions with his father-in-law, Olaf Quaran, King of Dublin. A great deal of commerce was at that time carried on between Norway and Dublin, so that Olaf met many of his countrymen in that city; and he heard from them how Norway was kept in vassalage to the King of Denmark, and how its people were oppressed by Earl Hakon, who was deputed by him to govern it, and how the Norsemen longed for one of the race of Harald Haarfager to reign over them.

“These tidings awoke within Olaf a strong desire to revisit the land of his forefathers; and, being encouraged by the Norwegian merchants in Dublin to aspire to the crown of Norway, he prepared eagerly for the en-



terprise, and soon afterward set sail with many ships for the north. On his arrival in Norway he was joyously welcomed by the Bonders, who, at a general Thing, held at Drontheim, chose him to be their king, and having seized the tyrant Hakon, beheaded him, and carried his head to Olaf. By the death of this man Olaf found himself the undisputed sovereign of Norway, and went through the whole country to receive the homage of the chiefs."

"I wonder," said Agnes, "whether he visited the island where he had been born?"

"We are told," replied her father, "that he went to the Uplands; and so it seems very likely that he did not pass by unheeded a spot which must have been endeared to him by his earliest recollections."

"That spot," observed Mrs. Daleson, "must have reminded him of his poor mother. Is it known whether she died in captivity or not?"

"Just after Olaf had been proclaimed King of Norway," replied Mr. Daleson, "he had the happiness to welcome back his

mother to her native land, and the story of her deliverance is so curious that I must tell it you.

“ There was a man of wealth and of good family, whose name was Lodin, who dwelt near Viken, in the south of Norway. Like most of his countrymen of the higher class in those days, he often went on merchant voyages, and sometimes on viking cruises. It happened one summer that he went on a voyage with much merchandise in a ship of his own. He directed his course first to Esthonia, and was there at a market, where, among other goods, many thralls or slaves were brought for sale. Among these he observed a woman whose features were familiar to him. She bore traces of early beauty, although now she was pale and emaciated, and her clothing was of the meanest kind. He gazed at her long and earnestly, until he recognised in this miserable being the once lovely Astrid, whom he had known as the happy bride of King Tryggve. He accosted her kindly, and asked how it fared with her.

“ ‘ Alas ! ’ replied she, ‘ it fares but ill in-

deed with me; for I have long been a slave, and now I am brought here for sale.'

"Lodin then told her who he was, and offered to buy her and bring her home to her friends on condition that she would marry him. Now as Astrid stood in great need, and, moreover, knew that Lodin was a man of high birth, rich and brave, she promised to do so for her ransom. Lodin accordingly brought her home to Norway, and married her with the consent of her friends.

"King Olaf was very glad to see his mother once more, and went to visit her at Viken. He seized this opportunity to begin the great work of Christianizing his people; and his mode of effecting this was so characteristic of those rude and barbarous times, that I must describe it to you. He first called together his mother's brothers and his step-father, and disclosed to them the object he had so much at heart, declaring that he would bring it to this,—that all Norway should be Christian or die. 'I trust to you most,' said he to them, 'for promoting this work, and I shall make of you

great and mighty men for doing so.' They all agreed to follow him in what he desired. King Olaf immediately made it publicly known that he recommended Christianity to all the people in his kingdom; and a few of his friends at Viken, who were the most powerful men in that neighborhood, having allowed themselves to be baptized, most of the inhabitants were persuaded to follow their example. Those who refused to do so were either severely punished or driven into exile. The king then went westward with a large body of men whom he had collected around him, and summoned the people of eight districts to a Thing at Drontheim; but the Bonders, knowing the purport of the visit, came fully armed. After the Thing was seated, the king invited them to adopt Christianity; but he had spoken only a short time when the Bonders called out to him to be silent, or they would drive him away. 'We did so,' said they, 'with Hakon, the foster-son of Athelstan, when he brought us the same message; and we held him in quite as much respect as we hold thee.'

"King Olaf, with all his zeal and im-

petuosity, had sense enough to perceive that these Bonders were too much incensed and also too well armed for him to gain his point with them at that time; so he spoke in a friendly tone, saying that it was his desire to be on good terms with the Bonders, and that he would come and meet them at their great midsummer festival, and that it would then be time enough for them to consider which faith they would hold by. So the anger of the Bonders was appeased, and the king departed peacefully from among them. Before midsummer Olaf had gathered a larger force around him, and went as he had promised to the sacrificial feast. Now when they were assembled together, King Olaf stood up and addressed them thus:—‘You Bonders having refused at our last meeting to be baptized, and having invited me to offer sacrifice to your gods, as King Hakon, Athelstan’s foster-son, had done, I have thought upon your request, and now I am come here to tell you that if I turn again to make sacrifices, then will I make the greatest of sacrifices that are in use among you, for I will sacrifice men. Neither will

I select slaves or malefactors for this purpose, but will take the noblest and the greatest men among you to offer up to the gods.' And then he named ten of those present who should be offered to the gods for peace and a fruitful season, commanding his men, at the same time, to lay hold of them immediately. The Bonders were so terrified at this resolution of the king, that they all consented to be baptized and to renounce heathenism. Neither did the king suffer them to depart until they had given their brothers or sons into his hands as pledges of their sincerity.

"Olaf next proceeded to a place called Maere, where stood the most venerated and magnificent of the idolatrous temples. There he had convened a Thing, and found the Bonders many in number and well armed; but he addressed them fearlessly, and urged them to abandon their idols and to worship the true God.

"Among the Bonders present was a man renowned for his bravery, and called Iron-Beard, who replied to the king by saying that it was the will of the Bonders then, as

it had been in former times, that the king 'should not break their laws.' 'We want, king,' said he, 'that thou shouldst offer sacrifice, as other kings before thee have done.'

"All the Bonders applauded his speech with a loud shout, and said that they would have all things according to what Iron-Beard had said. Olaf told them calmly that he was ready to go into the temple of their gods with them, and see what the practices were when they sacrificed. The Bonders were pleased with this, and both parties went into the temple. When the king came to the place where their gods were, he saw there Thor, who, as the chief among them, was raised above the rest and richly adorned with gold and silver. The king lifted up his gold ax, and struck the image of Thor from its seat. Then the king's men threw down all the other gods; and Iron-Beard, who was standing outside the door of the temple, was slain by one of the men. The Bonders seeing their leader killed, and daunted by the king's boldness, consented to profess Christianity. They also gave

hostages for their good conduct; and whatever hold heathenism might still have upon the hearts of the Norwegians, no further opposition was offered to the king's will upon this subject.

“Olaf had gathered around him many English ecclesiastics; and among them was one called Thangbrand, who is described as a passionate, ungovernable man, but as being, at the same time, a good scholar, and an energetic man. The king finding him a troublesome person in his household, resolved to send him to Iceland, to win over that land to the Christian faith;—a very unfitting missionary, we would say, and one whose temper but ill accorded with the meek and holy spirit of the gospel: but Olaf seems to have been very imperfectly instructed in these matters. So he dispatched the Saxon Thangbrand in a merchant vessel to Iceland. He landed at Ostfiord, and was hospitably received by Hall of Sidu, in whose house he passed the winter; and, on his persuasion, Hall and all his house-people, and many other chiefs, consented to be baptized: but there were many more who spoke against



it. Two of the Icelandic scalds composed a satire about Thangbrand, and, in a fit of rage, he nearly killed them both.

“At the end of two years Thangbrand returned to King Olaf, and told the ill success of his voyage; saying that the Icelanders had made lampoons upon him, and that some had even sought to slay him; adding, that there was very little hope of that country ever being made Christian. It happened that at this time there was a party of Icelandic merchants at the town of Nidaros, where Olaf was staying. Most of them were heathens; but a few had been baptized, and among others, a celebrated scald named Halfred, to whom the king was godfather, and some of whose lays upon Olaf Tryggvesson have descended even to our own days. Now Olaf was so enraged upon hearing Thangbrand’s account of his mission to Iceland, that he ordered all the Icelanders at Nidaros to be assembled by sound of horn, resolving to punish them for the ill-treatment Thangbrand had received from their countrymen. But Halfred and his Christian companions came to the king, and said,

‘King, thou must not fall from thy word—that however much any man may irritate thee, thou wilt forgive him if he turn from heathenism, and become Christian. All the Icelanders here are willing to be baptized, and through them we may find means to bring Christianity into Iceland; for there are among them sons of considerable people in Iceland, whose friends can advance the cause; but the priest Thangbrand proceeded there with violence, and such conduct the people there would not submit to.’ The king was pacified by these remonstrances, and all the Iceland men who were there were baptized. Shortly afterward they returned home, taking with them several men in holy orders, who were of a different spirit from Thangbrand; and their mission was so successful, that at the ensuing All-thing, Christianity was introduced by law into Iceland, and, in the course of the summer, most of the people were baptized.”

“Pray will you tell me, papa,” inquired Margaret, “what is meant by an All-thing?”

“You already know,” replied her father, “that in Norway all public business was

transacted at a *Thing*, or assembly, composed of the Bonders, or peasant-proprietors, each of whom had a right to express his opinion on the matter in question. Sometimes these Things were convened only in a particular district, whose inhabitants alone were concerned in it; but, on certain occasions, when the interests of the whole nation were concerned, and more especially when laws were to be made or altered, a general, or *All-thing* was convened, at which every Bonder in the kingdom had a right to appear. The Icelanders carried with them from Norway this representative form of government; and it is to these same rude old Norsemen that we ourselves also are indebted for the seed of our free institutions. In fact, our British Parliament is the legitimate offspring of the Norwegian Thing. Bearing this fact in mind, you will, I dare say, feel more interested in the history I am relating to you, than you might perhaps otherwise do."

"Indeed, papa," observed Henry, "I like very much to hear all about those old Icelanders and Norwegians. They talk so frankly and so boldly, just like some of our

own farmers. But pray, did Olaf ever visit England again?"

"Yes, as soon as his own country had submitted to him, he cast his eyes longingly toward our shores, and, uniting his fleet with that of Swein, King of Denmark, they sailed up the Thames with ninety-four ships, (A. D. 994,) and attacked London, by whose inhabitants they were bravely repulsed; but though their combined forces did not amount to ten thousand men, they were suffered to overrun and to ravage all the south-eastern counties of England. Etheldred the Unready, instead of expelling the invaders, sent to know the sum which would stop their depredations. They demanded £16,000, which was accordingly paid to them. A shameful transaction, and one that excused the saying of a bishop, named Lupus, who, in one of his sermons, declared that 'a single Norseman could put to flight ten Anglo-Saxons.'"

"The Englishmen of those days," said Henry, coloring, "must have been made of different stuff from what they are now. Do n't you think so, papa?"

Mr. Daleson, smiling at the indignant patriotism of his son, replied, "Yes, my dear boy, I agree with you that ten thousand men from Norway and Denmark would receive a very different sort of reception in our times; but when you become well acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon history, you will learn how it was that the English at this epoch were so inferior in courage to what they had been under Alfred's sway. My business now, however, is only with Olaf Tryggvesson; so I must tell you that Etheldred, having invited him to his court, and given hostages for his safety, Olaf went to the royal city, where he was received with great magnificence. During his visit he received the Christian rite of confirmation, and on taking leave of Etheldred, he pledged himself never again to invade England,—a promise which he faithfully kept.

"So King Olaf returned home in peace; but he was too unquiet a spirit to remain long at rest. Hitherto he had triumphed over all his foes; but he was now about to provoke an enemy who was more dangerous to grapple with than any he had yet

encountered,—a proud and revengeful woman.

“Sweden was at this time governed by a youthful king, whose mother Sigrid united to the attractions of great wealth and beauty the terrible vices of cruelty and pride. Many chieftains sought her in marriage. Among others, there came from Norway a tributary king named Harald Graenske to pay his court to her. He had known her in her early youth, and was her foster-brother; but he had lost sight of her for many years, during which time she had been married to the king of Sweden, whom she now survived. Harald Graenske had also married a worthy woman, named Aasta, who was still alive. When he entreated Sigrid to marry him, she told him he might consider himself very well off to have so good a wife as Aasta; and that she, for her part, would have nothing to say to him. Harald says, ‘Aasta is a good and clever woman; but she is not so well born as I am.’ Sigrid replies, ‘It may be that thou art of higher birth, but she is the mother of thy son.’”

\* This son was subsequently known as Saint Olava.

By way of escaping further importunity, she immediately set off for another of her estates. Harald followed her thither, and on arriving at her retreat, he found another tributary king, called Wifawald, from Russia, who had come on the same errand. They were both conducted to a large hall, where Sigrid caused them to be richly provided with meat and ale, so that they became intoxicated and fell asleep. After that she commanded the doors to be shut, and the hall set on fire, so that those who were within were burned to death. 'Thus,' said Sigrid, 'will I teach petty kings to come making love to me.' And for this proud, unfeeling behavior was she called Sigrid Storräda (the haughty one). This was the woman to whom Olaf Tryggvesson, on his return from England, sent ambassadors, demanding her hand in marriage. It is possible that he might not have heard of the cruel deed which has just been related to you, as it occurred before his accession to the throne of Norway. Be this as it may, he sent to offer himself as her suitor, and received a gracious answer."

"But, papa," said Agnes, "what had become of the Irish princess he had married? we have not heard anything of her for a long time."

"I am sorry," replied Mr. Daleson, "not to be able to answer your question, for I nowhere find any mention made of her after Olaf's departure from Dublin: so we may presume she was dead."

"The following summer Olaf visited Queen Sigrid in Sweden, and their union was agreed on. Then Olaf said that Sigrid should first profess the Christian faith and be baptized, to which she answered: 'It is not likely that I will abandon the faith in which I was born, and which my parents held before me; but you may, for aught I care, believe in what God you please.'

"King Olaf was so incensed at this answer, that he rose up, and, striking her in the face with a glove which he held in his hand, said hastily: 'Why should I care to have you, you old heathen jade?' Then Sigrid stood up and said: 'This blow will once prove your bane,—a threat which in the sequel was only too surely fulfilled; for



Sigrid afterward married King Swein of Denmark, and she never ceased exciting him and her son, the Swedish monarch, against Olaf Tryggvesson.

"Meanwhile King Olaf obtained, by very unlikely means, a far more gentle and willing spouse. You all remember the name of Burrislaf, King of Vendland, do you not?"

"Yes," replied Margaret; "he was father to Queen Geyra, whom Olaf married soon after his departure from Russia."

"Well," resumed Mr. Daleson, "this old king persuaded the Danish sovereign to purchase peace of him, by giving his fair young sister Thyri in marriage to him; but the match was very hateful to Thyri, for Burrislaf was a heathen and she a Christian. All her entreaties, however, were of no avail; for Swein, placing her under the care of her foster-father, Otsur Aakeson, and giving her some female attendants, sent her into Vendland, where she was joyfully received by King Burrislaf, who at once bestowed upon her ample possessions as his marriage gift. But poor Thyri was very

miserable, and during the seven days' feasting which followed her arrival, she would neither eat nor drink among the heathen. At the end of this time she fled away secretly by night with her foster-father, concealing herself in the forests, and keeping the most solitary paths. Thus they proceeded, until they reached Norway, which seemed to be their only secure place of retreat. There Thyri made herself known to King Olaf, who offered her rest and protection; and as he thought her a fair woman, and moreover that she spoke sensibly and well, he asked her for his wife, to which she consented, thinking it was an honor to be allied to so renowned a king. So they were married, and Olaf became much attached to his wife. Thyri, with all her amiability, had one very weak point in her character—she liked show and splendor; and often complained to her husband that she, who had so rich a dowry in Vendland, had no possessions in Norway that were suitable to a queen. Then she would urge him to get her property restored to her, saying that King Burrislaf was so great a friend of his,

that he would not deny him anything if they were to meet. King Olaf paid but little attention to these repeated hints. One spring day, however, it happened that he found a very lovely rose, in full bloom, which, being a rarity at that early season, he carried to the queen's apartments, and presented to her. Thyri, instead of receiving it graciously, put it aside with her hand, saying, with tears in her eyes: "A far other present was it that my mother received from Harald Gormson on her marriage; but he had no fear of going out of his own land, as was shown when he came here to Norway and seized on all the scatt and revenues; whereas it seemeth to me that thou art afraid of going across the Danish dominions for this brother of mine, King Swein.' A most unkind speech was this on the part of Queen Thyri, and one which she afterward bitterly lamented.

"As she spoke thus, King Olaf angrily started up, saying: 'Never did I fear thy brother Swein, and if we meet he shall give way before me.' Soon after the king convoked a Thing, and announced that he in-

tended that summer to take a voyage to Vendland, demanding for the occasion ships and men from the whole kingdom. He thus got together sixty well-armed vessels, with which he steered south to Vendland, taking Queen Thyri with him on the expedition.

“The meeting between the two kings was a very amicable one. Olaf was joyfully welcomed by many of his old friends; and Burrislaf having restored to him the property which was his due, he prepared for his departure from Vendland: nor did a prouder, happier heart beat than King Olaf’s, when he ordered the war-horns to sound the departure, and found himself once more on board the Long Serpent, which was his largest and finest dragon ship.”

“What do you mean by a dragon ship, papa?” asked Henry.

“Dragon ships,” replied his father, “was the name given to those which were very large, and had a dragon’s head carved on the prow, and over the stern the appearance of a coiled dragon’s tail. These were always richly painted and gilded; and when

one of these long low vessels was scudding through the waves, with its sails set, its shining red and white shields hung scale-like over the rails from stem to stern, and its thirty or forty oars moving in measured time, it must have been no bad representation of the ideal figure of a dragon flying across the waters. Olaf had three of these dragon ships. They were named the Crane, the Short Serpent, and the Long Serpent; and it was on board the last, as I have already told you, that he set sail for Norway, in the full pride of success and hope, little dreaming of the foes who awaited him on his voyage home. Sigrid the Haughty had never forgotten his unmannerly blow, and his still ruder speech, and she longed for an opportunity to be revenged for both. Since her marriage with the Danish King Swein, she had often tried to provoke him into a war with Olaf; and on hearing that the latter had gone to Vendland, she renewed her endeavors, and taunted her husband so bitterly with having suffered Olaf to marry his sister Thyri without his consent, saying that his 'predecessors would

not have borne such an insult,' that at length he was goaded into rage, and agreed with her son, the Swedish king, to join their forces together, and to await Olaf on his passage through the Sound, and there give him battle. He had also another ally, strong in hatred as in power, Jarl Eric, a Norwegian chieftain, who had been banished by Olaf from his native land. The confederates met together by appointment in a small island called Svoldär, which lay directly in Olaf's homeward course. Their united forces were far more numerous than Olaf's; and yet it is very doubtful what might have been the result of their encounter, if they had not employed an emissary in his fleet, the treacherous Earl Sigvald, to divide the ships of his fleet, and thus make them an easier prey.

"It was, we are told, very beautiful weather and clear sunshine, the day that the kings of Denmark and Sweden, together with Jarl Eric and some of their people ascended a height on the island of Svoldär to look around them, and their fleet lay near the shore under cover of the island. After

a while they saw many vessels out at sea, one of which was very large. Then both the kings said it must be the Long Serpent, but Jarl Eric denied it. At the same moment three great vessels came sailing from behind the promontory, and after them followed a fourth, an enormous and magnificent dragon ship, whose match in size and splendor they had never seen before. It was painted and gilt all over, and was so long that there were eight and fifty oars on each side; and was besides so lofty, that its deck stood high out of the water. There was no further dispute, for all saw that this was the Long Serpent, and all hurried down, preparing themselves for the fight.

“ Meanwhile the traitorous Sigvald, in whom Olaf implicitly trusted, had contrived to separate the Norwegian fleet by offering to guide the largest ships through the deepest channels of the Sound, while the smaller vessels sailed out to sea. Earl Sigvald accordingly, who was acting as pilot to the Norwegian fleet, led on the choicest portion of it under the island of Svoldär, and then let fall his sails. The commander of the

Crane, which was the ship nearest to him, called out, asking him why he sailed that way. Sigvald replied, that he was waiting for King Olaf, as he feared there were enemies in the way. Then the captains of the Crane and other large vessels lowered their sails also, waiting till Olaf Tryggvesson was come up. In a few moments onward came the Long Serpent, with King Olaf himself at the helm, and his trusty stambos, Ulf the Red, who bore his banner, and Marshal Kolbjörn, in the stem of the vessel. These were two of his choicest men."

"Will you kindly tell me," interrupted Margaret, "what is the meaning of a stambo?"

"How can Margaret stop papa at such a moment?" muttered Henry in an impatient tone.

"You must remember, Henry," said his father smiling, "that Margaret has not so much warlike ardor as yourself, and I need only pause a moment to tell her that the stambos were people appointed to defend the stem of the ship; a post which was always reserved for the bravest. Now when



King Olaf sailed in toward the island, the united fleets of the enemy rowed forward to meet him. Some of his people hinted that Olaf ought to retreat, and not to engage with such superior forces; but the king standing high on the quarter-deck cried out: 'Lower the sails: never shall men of mine think of flight. I have never fled from battle. Let God dispose of my life; but flight I shall never take.' He then ordered that they should lash their ships together, which was done, and the prows of the Crane and of the Short Serpent were bound to that of the Long Serpent. When the king saw this, he called out to his men, ordering them to lay the larger ship more in advance, so that its stern should not lie so far behind in the fleet. When Ulf, the Red, heard this, he said: 'In this way the prow of the Long Serpent will soon be mastered.' The king replies: 'I did not think that I had a stambo who was a coward.'

"Says Ulf, 'Defend thou the stern to-day only as I shall defend the prow.'

"Olaf, in the heat of the moment, laid an arrow on his bow and aimed at Ulf; but

Ulf said, 'Shoot another way, king, where it is more needful: my work is thy gain.'

"After that the ships were bound together, and the prow of Olaf's vessel was made to project beyond the others, as he had commanded. Olaf Tryggvesson stood high in the stern of his vessel, and was seen above all the rest. He had a gilt helmet and shield, as well as a short red cloak over his coat of mail, and was thus distinguished from all except Marshal Kolbjörn, who was dressed very like him. When King Olaf saw that the scattered forces of the enemy gathered themselves together under the banners of their ships, he asked, 'Who is the chief of the force right opposite to us?'

"He was answered that it was King Swein, with the Danish army.

"The king replies, 'We are not afraid of these soft Danes, for there is no bravery in them; but who are the troops on the right of the Danes?'

"He was answered that it was King Olaf, with the Swedish forces. 'Better it were,' says the king, 'for these Swedes to be sitting at home, killing their sacrifices, than to

venturing under our weapons from the long Serpent. But who owns the large ships on the larboard side of the Danes?’

“‘That is Jarl Eric Hakonson,’ say they.

“The king replies, ‘He, methinks, has good reason for meeting us; and we may expect the sharpest conflict with these men, for they are Norsemen like ourselves.’

“And so it proved; for the Danes and Swedes, after a short but severe conflict, during which they lost many men, withdrew their ships out of shot all round Olaf’s ship; but Jarl Eric lay always close alongside of the ships, using his swords and battle-axes, and as fast as people fell in his ship, others, both Danes and Swedes, came in their place. So says Haldor:—

“‘Sharp was the clang of shield and sword,  
And shrill the song of spears on board,  
And whistling arrows thickly flew  
Against the Serpent’s gallant crew.  
And still fresh foemen, it is said,  
Earl Eric to her long side led;  
Whole armies of his Danes and Swedes,  
Wielding on high their blue sword-blades.’

“The battle grew fiercer every moment, and at last it came to this, that all Olaf

Tryggvesson's ships were cleared of men, except the Long Serpent, on board of which all who could carry arms were gathered. Then Iron-Beard (so was Jarl Eric's vessel named) lay side by side with the Serpent, and the fight went on with battle-axe and sword. So many weapons were cast into the Serpent, that the shields could scarcely receive them; for on all sides the Serpent was beset by war-ships. Then King Olaf's-men became so fired with rage, that they ran on board the enemies' ships to get at the people with their swords, and kill them; and in their impetuous fury, many of Olaf's men went overboard, and sank under their weapons, thinking they were fighting on dry ground. King Olaf stood the whole day in the stern, fighting manfully, although the blood flowing from beneath his iron glove marked his wounds.

"One of the sharpest of his bow-shooters, named Einar, shot at Jarl Eric, and the arrow went close to Eric's head, passing right through the tiller and the ropes that were wrapped about it. The Jarl, having asked if any knew who shot so hard, commanded

a famous Finnish archer to 'shoot that tall man at the mast.' As Einar bent his bow again the Finn's arrow cut through his bow-string. 'What is that,' cried King Olaf, 'that broke with such a noise?'

"'Norway, king, from thy hands,' cried Einar.

"'God rules for land and kingdom, and not thy bow,' returned Olaf; 'take my bow, and shoot with it!' and he threw his bow to Einar.

"Einar took the bow, and drew it over the head of the arrow.

"'Too weak, too weak,' said he, 'for the bow of a mighty king!' and, throwing the bow aside, he took sword and shield, and fought valiantly.

"More and more desperate grew the struggle. Twice did Jarl Eric board the Serpent, and twice was he driven back. At length the deck was crowded with foes, and King Olaf, being left nearly alone, and seeing nothing before him but death or captivity, raised his shield above his head, and sprang into the sea. The few who still survived were picked up by Jarl Eric's boats, and

their lives were granted them. King Olaf Tryggvesson was sought for in vain. The whole fleet of the confederates, on hearing of his death, raised a shout of victory, so terrible was his name to them. This fear survived even after his death, for many trembled at the thought that he might be yet alive. Some averred that he had taken off his armor under water, and had swam a great way, until he was taken up by a friendly cutter, and conveyed to Vendland, from whence he wandered southward to Rome, and finally to Jerusalem, where he lived long in a monastery. Certain it is, that he was never more seen in the North. Queen Thyri, whose unseemly words had caused all this desolation, so bitterly lamented his death, that she would neither eat nor drink, but died on the ninth day. So easy is it to utter unkind and taunting words; so impossible to arrest the torrent of evil that may flow from them!"

The story was at an end; and all remained silent for a moment, so intense had been their excitement at the last stirring scene. Agnes was the first to speak. "Poor Thyri!"

whispered she to her mamma, "don't you pity her, mamma?"

"She was indeed most deeply to be pitied," replied Mrs. Daleson; "so wrong were her words, and so miserable their consequences."

"And what a noble fellow Olaf was!" exclaimed Henry; "he was a hero indeed!"

"And never more so," observed his father, "than when in the hour of his extremest peril he calmly acknowledged God's sovereign sway over the kingdoms of the earth."

"I could almost fancy," said Mrs. Daleson, "when listening to the story of that battle, that you were telling about Nelson, or some other of our great naval heroes."

"Yes," replied her husband: "there is a strong family likeness; and it is this which increases our interest in these northern warriors."

"I hope, papa," said Henry, "you have some more of these heroes to tell us about."

Mr. Daleson assured him, smiling, that his budget was not yet quite exhausted, and that he had other northern heroes yet in store for them.

### King Olave, the Hero and the Saint.

"WOULD not this be a famous night for some tale full of terror or of wonder?" said Henry Daleson to his sisters, an evening or two after they had heard the story of Astrid and her son. "Only listen to the wind, how furiously it blows, as if it meant to knock down the old house about our ears!"

"Yes," said Agnes, shuddering. "It really frightens me. The storm is rushing along so loud and so fiercely, just as if some mighty giant were coming down upon us!"

"But you know, Agnes, there are really no such beings as giants," observed Margaret; "so you need not be afraid of them."

"Indeed, I can't help it," replied Agnes.

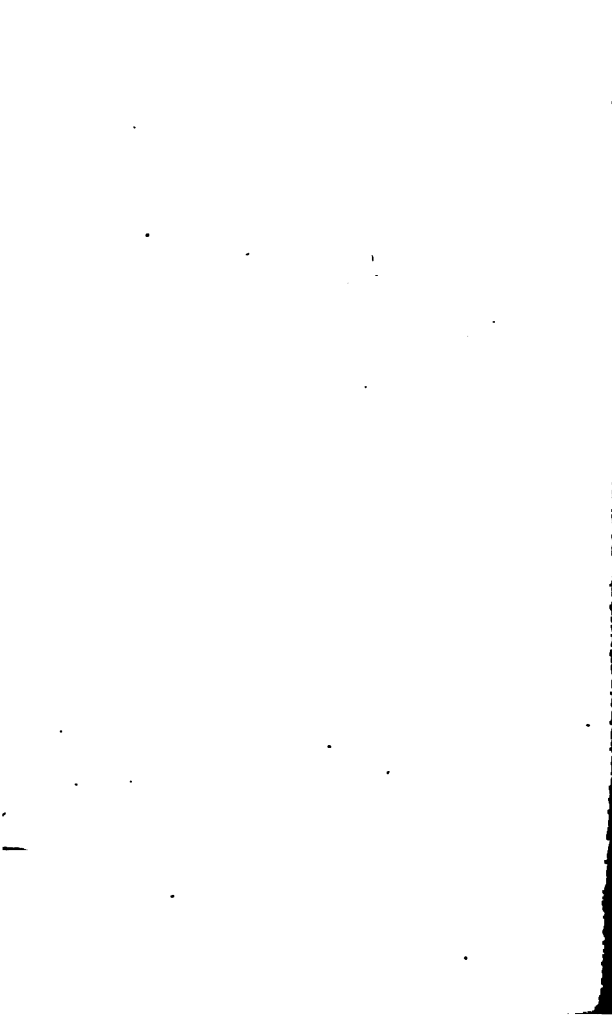
"Can't help it!" re-echoed Henry, laughing. "You will never be a heroine, Agnes, if you give way to fear in that way. But," continued he, "there is papa sitting so quietly in his chair, and looking so grave, that I am sure he must be thinking of the





KING OLAVE.

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old Norsemen and their deeds. I wonder whether he will tell us a story to-night." So saying, he approached his father, and asked him whether he had any hero in his budget for them that evening.

"Yes," replied Mr. Daleson, "I have one who was both a hero and a saint."

"A saint!" said Mrs. Daleson, smiling; "then he must be very unlike all your other heroes; for they were anything but saintly in their deeds and dispositions."

"You know, my dear," replied her husband, "that it would not be fair to judge of the people who existed in those rude and barbarous times by the same standard as applies to our present refined and enlightened age. I wish you to remember this," continued Mr. Daleson, turning to his children; "otherwise you will often be perplexed by the grievous inconsistencies which mark the lives of many in the olden times."

"But," observed Margaret, "can this apply to Christians as well as heathens?"

"I am sorry to say it often does," replied her father; "for, owing to the mistaken ideas of their teachers, they were led to be-

lieve that the greatest crime might be atoned for by a life of penance : and even the best among them conceived it was a meritorious act to persecute those who refused to profess the Christian faith.

"This indeed is an error, which has at different periods crept in among most Christian sects ; so that even good and pious men have been found, in whom a fiery zeal seemed to have swallowed up all the kindlier and more gentle graces of Christianity. These observations may help you to form a fairer and truer judgment of St. Olave, whose story I am now about to relate to you. He is not quite a stranger to any of you," continued Mr. Daleson, "for I have already introduced him to you."

"I do not remember him," said Margaret.

"Nor I," observed Henry.

"Well, then, I must remind you that when Harald Graenske, King of Westfold, was burned to death by Sigrid the Haughty, because of his presumption in paying her his addresses, he was already married to a lady named Aasta, who had borne him a son : that son was Olave the Saint."

"O! yes; I remember quite well," cried out Agnes.

"And so do I," repeated Margaret and Henry.

"But," observed Mrs. Daleson, "you never told us what became of Aasta and her child."

"Well, I am now going to tell you about them," replied her husband. "Being now alone and unprotected, Aasta took refuge in the house of her father, who received her and her infant son with great kindness, and extended the same cordial welcome to Hrane, the foster-father of her child.

"Before very long Aasta married another petty king, dwelling in Ringarike, who, like her former husband, was a descendant of Harald Haarfager's. The Uplands abounded with these tributary kings, all springing from the same stock, and all possessing dominions which they held in subjection to the supreme ruler of Norway.

"King Sigurd Syr was of a very opposite character to his wife, who was of a high, proud spirit, whereas he was peaceful, taciturn, and prudent. He was a man of the

best understanding in Norway, and, although very wealthy, was in no wise given to pomp or show.

“Aasta and her son had been accompanied to their new home by the kind-hearted Hrane, who could not bear to be separated from his foster-son; so they all dwelt together; and the little fellow was a rosy, chubby child of three years old, when news came that King Olaf Tryggvesson, who had recently become king of Norway, was coming that way with his court and his clergy, to establish Christianity in the Uplands. King Sigurd Syr received his sovereign with fitting respect; and he and Aasta were among those who received baptism during the monarch's visit. Aasta's son was also baptized; and King Olaf, taking a fancy to the child, bore him to the font, and bestowed on him his own name of Olaf,—or Olave, as it is called in England. Perhaps he detected within his godson the seeds of that resolute and daring spirit by which he was himself distinguished, and which St. Olave afterward possessed in a most remarkable degree.

“Sigurd Syr was fond of his step-son; but their dispositions very ill agreed, as appears from a trifling circumstance which occurred when Olave was about ten years old. It happened one day that King Sigurd wanted to ride out, when all his men were away from the house; so he told Olave to saddle his horse. Olave thought his dignity hurt by this order; but, being a good-tempered boy, he went to the goats’ pen, led forth the largest goat, and, having put on him the king’s saddle, informed Sigurd that his steed was ready for him. Now when King Sigurd came out and saw what Olave had done, he said, ‘It is easy to see that thou wilt little regard my orders; and thy mother will think it right that I order thee to do nothing that is against thy own inclination. I see well enough that we are of very different dispositions, and that thou art far prouder than I am.’ Olave answered little, but went his way laughing.

“Olave was twelve years old when he, for the first time, went on board a man of war. Aasta got his foster-father Hrane to command a ship of war, and take Olave un-

der his charge; for Hrane had often been on war expeditions. When Olave in this way got a ship and men under his own orders, the crew gave him the title of king; for it was the custom when any one of kingly descent went upon a viking cruise, that he should receive the title of king, although he had neither land nor kingdom. Olave's first expedition was to Sweden, where he avenged his father's death by destroying and burning the country; and the Swedish king, Olaf, was so enraged at his escaping from an ambush he had laid for him, that he could never endure him afterward, and was wont to call him in derision 'Olave the Thick,' on account of his figure being stouter than was usual in early youth.

"Olave made several forays of this sort in the countries bordering the Baltic; but before many years had passed, he began to turn his eyes wistfully toward England; and, learning that Etheldred was sore pressed by his powerful enemy, Canute, King of Denmark, he offered his services to the English monarch, who gladly accepted them. So Olave, with a great troop of Norsemen,



sailed up the Thames, for the purpose of attacking London, which was in possession of the Danes. A desperate conflict took place on a bridge, which was strongly fortified by the Danes, and upon which they stood in crowds, casting down weapons upon the advancing ships. Olave, by his skill and bravery, contrived to fasten cables round the piles by which the bridge was supported, and then, rowing down the stream, drew the cables after them, so that the piles were loosened, and the bridge, being heavily laden, gave way, and most of its defenders sank into the river. The remainder, being panic-struck, fled; and thus Etheldred was borne into his capital by the bold and enterprising Norsemen. Olave's war-cry on this occasion was—'*To win, or die!*' So says Sigvat the scald:—

“ ‘At London Bridge stout Olave gave  
Odin's law to his war-men brave—

“*To win, or die!*”

And their foemen fly.

Some by the dyke-side refuge gain—

Some in their tents on Southwark plain!

This fierce attack

Brought victory back.’

“ King Olave passed all the winter with King Etheldred ; and his hand was ever ready to do a bold and venturous deed, where it was required. To him was committed the siege of Canterbury ; which he rescued from the Danes ; not, however, without a fearful amount of misery and slaughter. So says Ottar Swarle :—

“ All in the gray of morn  
Broad Canterbury's forced.  
Black smoke from house-roofs borne  
Hides fire that does its worst ;  
And many a man laid low  
By the battle-ax's blow,  
Waked by the Norsemen's cries,  
Scarce had time to rub his eyes.’

“ After having brought a great part of the country into subjection to Etheldred, the whole defense of the kingdom was committed to King Olave ; and he remained in England for three years, until the death of Etheldred. On the accession of Etheldred's sons, Edmund and Edward, Olave sailed southward to the coast of France, and committed many depredations there. One of the French castles which he captured was

ransomed at the cost of twelve thousand golden shillings.

“It is curious to perceive how, amid these scenes of turmoil and plunder, Olave’s heart was set upon a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which, in those days, was regarded as a work of great goodness and piety. His thoughts also turned northward, with many longing and ambitious hopes. While in this unsettled state of mind, it happened one night, as his vessel was lying in the Garonne, waiting for a favorable breeze to bear him southward toward the Straits of Gibraltar, that he had a dream, in which he beheld a warrior, who looked sternly upon him, commanding him to give up his intended pilgrimage, and saying, ‘Return to thy heritage, for thou shalt be king over Norway forever.’

“Most probably his ‘wish was father to the’ dream. Be that as it may, Olave interpreted the dream according to his own desire, and concluded that he should be king over that country, and his posterity after him for many ages to come. Accordingly he bent his course northward, and, cruising

along the coast of France, must, by the telling of the scald, have carried desolation into the very heart of France, for so sing the poets Ottar and Sigvald :—

“ ‘ Our young king, blythe and gay,  
Is foremost in the fray :  
Poitou he plunders, Touraine burns,—  
He fights and wins where’er he turns.’ ”

And again :—

“ ‘ The Norseman’s king is on his cruise,  
His blue steel staining,  
Rich booty gaining,  
And all men trembling at the news.  
The Norseman’s king is up the Loire :  
Rich Parthenay  
In ashes lay ;  
Far inland reached the Norseman’s spear.’ ”

“ Thirteen years had now passed since the fall of King Olaf Tryggvesson, upon whose death Norway was divided into three parts. Swein of Denmark got one, Olaf of Sweden another, and Jarl Eric the third.”

“ Was that the man who boarded the Long Serpent at the battle of Svoldär, and got possession of her ? ” inquired Henry.

“ Yes, the very same,” replied his father.  
“ He bore rule not only over his own share

of the kingdom, but also over that part which had been assigned to the Swedish king, and in whose behalf he held it. At the time of which we now speak, however, Jarl Eric had come over to England to assist Canute in his conquests; and after having fought many battles, 'died in his bed,'—a sort of end which, among those heathen warriors, was counted a grievous misfortune, as the highest seats in Walhalla were supposed to be reserved for those who perished in battle.

“On the death of Eric, the government of Norway was committed to his two sons, Eric and Hakon, both of them brave but inexperienced youths. It was at this critical moment that Olave approached the coast of Norway, with only two ships of burden, in which were two hundred and twenty well-armed and chosen men,—for he had left the greater part of his fleet in an English harbor, until he saw how matters were likely to turn out. He landed first upon an island called Saelö, and this signifying in Norse, *The Lucky Isle*, he observed that this was a good omen for him; but the next

moment, stepping upon a clayey spot, *he* slipped with one foot while the other stood firm. 'The king falls!' said he to Hrane, who was at his side.

" 'Nay,' replies his foster-father, 'thou didst not fall, king, but set fast foot in the soil.'

" Olave laughing, replied, 'It may be so, if God will.'

" It chanced the following day, that Hakon, (Jarl Eric's son,) not knowing that there were any enemies at hand, and mistaking Olave's ships for merchant vessels, steered his own ship fearlessly between them; whereupon he and his men were, after a brief resistance, made prisoners. Earl Hakon was led up to the king's ship. He was one of the handsomest men that could be seen. He had long hair as fine as silk, bound about his head with a gold ornament."

"How womanish! was it not, papa?" said Henry.

"These long tresses, of which we occasionally hear among the Norsemen," replied his father, "were probably relics of their

Asiatic origin: for you may read in the history of the Roman empire of the flowing locks worn by the barbarians who wasted Italy, and who had originally sprung from the same north-eastern country as the inhabitants of Norway; so in those days," added Mr. Daleson, "long hair was no symptom of effeminacy.

"When Hakon had seated himself in the forehold, Olave said to him, 'It is not false what is said of your family, that ye are handsome people to look at; but now your luck seems to have deserted you.'

"Hakon the earl replied, 'It has ever been the case, that success is changeable; and there is no luck in the matter. It has gone with your family as with mine, to have, by turns, the better lot. I am little beyond childhood in years; and at any rate we could not have defended ourselves, as we did not expect an attack on the way. It may turn out better with us another time.'

"Then said King Olave: 'Dost thou not apprehend that thou art in that condition that, hereafter, there can be neither victory nor defeat for thee?'

"Hakon coolly replies: 'That is what thou only canst determine, king, according to thy pleasure.'

"Olave says, 'What wilt thou give me, earl, if, for this time, I let thee go safe and unhurt?'

"Hakon asks what ransom he will take.

"'Nothing will I take,' replied Olave, 'save thy promise, that thou wilt leave the country, give up thy kingdom, with an oath that thou wilt never go into battle against me.'

"The earl answered that he would do so; and King Olave accordingly gave him and his men life and peace. Immediately afterward Earl Hakon sailed for England, where he was well received by his mother's brother, King Canute, who gave him great power in his kingdom. As for Olave, he landed with a part of his followers, and went eastward, holding Things with the Bonders all over the country. Some of them were opposed to him; but the majority were, he found, tired of foreign rule, and ready to receive a king of the old race. In autumn he proceeded to his step-father, King Sigurd's,



where his return was hailed with delight by his mother Aasta.

"It was early in the day, and Aasta was sitting in the room surrounded by her maidens, when some servants ran in and told her that Olave was approaching. Aasta rose up directly, and prepared to have everything put in the best possible order. She commanded four girls to bring out quickly all that belonged to the decoration of the apartment, which was immediately furnished with hangings, and supplied with additional seats. Two men brought straw for the floor; two brought forward four-cornered tables and the drinking horns; two bore out victuals, and placed the meat on the table; two carried in the ale; and two she sent out with the greatest haste to procure all else that was needed. Messengers were speedily sent to seek King Sigurd wherever he might be; and they brought to him his dress clothes, and his horse with gilt saddle, and his bridle which was gilt and set with precious stones. Four men she sent off to the four quarters of the country to invite all the great people to a feast, which she prepared

as a rejoicing for her son's return. All who were before in the house she made to dress themselves with the best raiment they had; and she lent clothes to those who had none suitable to the occasion.

"King Sigurd Syr was standing in his corn-field when the messengers brought him the news, and also told him of the preparations made by Aasta. He had many people busy at work upon his farm. Some were cutting corn, some binding it, some putting it into stack or barn; and Sigurd was going from place to place, directing the men in their work. His dress, we are told, consisted of a blue kirtle and blue hose; shoes which were laced about the legs; a gray cloak, and a gray wide-brimmed hat, with a vail over his face; a staff in his hand, with a gilt silver head on it, and a silver ring around it."

"A veil over his face!" cried out Agnes.  
"How very queer!"

"So it seems to us," replied her father; "but in countries where the heat, as in Norway, in the summer is intense, it is usual even for men to guard themselves in some

way or other from the incessant attacks of insects; and I am told that even in the present day it is no uncommon thing for Norwegian men, during the height of summer, to protect their faces by a veil from the stings of mosquitoes."

"And how did Sigurd receive the news of Olave's approach?" inquired Mrs. Daleson.

"The messengers said to him, 'Aasta told us to bring thee word, how much it lay at her heart that thou shouldest on this occasion comport thyself in the fashion of great men, and show a disposition more akin to Harald Haarfager's race than to thy mother's father's, Rane the Thinnose; although he, too, was a very wise man.' Sigurd replies, 'The news ye bring me is weighty, and ye bring it forward with great heat. Already, before now, Aasta has been mightily taken up with people who were not so near to her as Olave; and I see she is still of the same disposition. But can she lead her son out of the business with the same splendor she is leading him into it? My opinion is, that they who mix themselves up in it, have but little regard to their property or life:

for this man, King Olave, goes against great superiority of power; and the wrath of the Danish and Swedish kings lies at the foot of his determination; so let him beware what he ventures to do.'

"The worthy step-father having thus given vent to his spleen, quietly set about doing what his wife wished him to do. Having sat down, he made them take off his shoes, and put on corduvan boots, to which he bound his gold spurs. Then he put on his cloak and coat, and dressed himself in his finest clothes, with a scarlet cloak over all; girded on his sword, set a gilded helmet on his head, and mounted his horse. He gathered around him thirty well-clothed men, and rode home with them. As they rode up to the house, they saw, at a little distance, the waving banners of King Olave; and there was he himself, with about one hundred men, all well equipped. The house-tops were covered with people. King Sigurd immediately saluted his step-son from horse-back in a friendly way, and invited him and his men to come in and take a cup with him. As for Aasta, she went up and kissed her

son, and invited him to stay with her, adding, that land and people, and all she possessed, stood at his service. Olave thanked her kindly for her invitation. Then she took him by the hand and led him into the room to the high seat. King Sigurd got men to take charge of their clothes and horses; and then he himself went to his high seat, and the feast was made with great splendor.

“A day or two after, King Olave called together Aasta, Sigurd, and Hrane, and told them how it grieved him to find the possessions of his forefathers in the hands of foreigners, and that he was determined to recover his heritage, not through the favor of the Danish or Swedish monarchs, but with battle-ax and sword; and, added he, ‘either I shall lay all this kingdom under my rule, which they got by the slaughter of my kinsman, Olaf Tryggvesson, or I shall fall here upon my inheritance, in the land of my fathers.’ He concluded by urging Sigurd to support the man who thus came forward to ‘raise up the race of Harald Haarfager,’ saying that whether Sigurd ‘showed any

manhood in the affair or not,' he knew the inclination of the people well, that they all wanted to be free from the slavery of foreign masters, and would therefore heartily aid him in his attempt. The cautious Sigurd, in reply, observed that it would be a very daring measure to enter into strife with the Swedish and Danish monarchs; but that Olave had so much natural pride and ambition, he knew it was useless to attempt to dissuade him from his purpose; so he would aid and strengthen him to the best of his ability, and also speak to the other upland kings in his favor. 'It is not unlikely,' added he, 'that thou wilt get good support from the people, as the commonalty always loves what is new; and it went so before, when Olaf Tryggvesson came to the country, that all rejoiced at it, although he did not long enjoy the kingdom.

"The ardent Aasta replied in a far different strain to Olave's proposal. 'For my part, my son,' said she, 'I am rejoiced at thy arrival, but much more at thy advancing thy honor. I will spare nothing for that purpose that stands in my power; although it

be but little help that can be expected from me. But if a choice could be made, I would rather that thou shouldst be the supreme king of Norway, even if thou shouldst not sit longer in thy kingdom than Olaf Trygvesson did, than that thou shouldst not be a greater king than Sigurd Syr is, and die the death of old age.' With this the conference closed. Olave remained a while with all his men, in Ringarike, his step-father entertaining them, day about, the one day with fish and milk, the other day with meat and ale.

"Sigurd Syr was as good as his word, for he lost no time in speaking to the upland chiefs, and persuading them that it was alike for their honor and interest to cast off the yoke of foreigners, and choose a brave and distinguished man like Olave, the descendant of their ancient sovereigns, to be their king. After some discussion they adopted the same opinion; and a Thing was summoned, for the further consideration of the matter. At this meeting Olave addressed the people, promising, if they would choose him for their sovereign, that he, on

his part, would observe their ancient laws, and defend the land from foreign masters and chiefs. His manly bearing, his high reputation, and his fair promises won upon the people, who gladly accepted him as their king. So a league was made between both parties, and ratified by an oath.

“King Olave immediately began his progress through the country, appointing feasts before him wherever there were royal farms; and the people thronged to him from all quarters, so that even those Bonders who were unfriendly to him did not dare to oppose him. Before long, however, a formidable foe presented himself in the person of Earl Swend, the king of Sweden’s deputy, who gathered together a large force, among whom were many Drontheim men; and they encountered each other at sea, when a very sharp conflict ensued, in which Olave was victorious. Soon afterward, Earl Swend expired, and Olave found himself the undisputed master of Norway. The Swedish king was very much enraged at his success, and always spoke of him contemptuously, and sent messengers to demand tribute of



him; which Olave refused: so there was much strife on the borders of the two countries. Olave had, however, a good friend in Sweden, Earl Ronald, who ruled over West Gothland, and whose wife Ingeborg was a sister of King Olaf Tryggvesson. She had great influence over her husband, and gained his good will for the Norwegian king.

“Now it happened one day, that King Olave was sitting in the court-room of his new house at Nidaros,—a palace which he had just built for himself. The king, as was his wont, had risen early in the morning, and, after hearing matins, or morning-prayer, in the church, had entered the court-room, a large apartment, with doors at both ends. The king’s raised seat was in the middle of the room, and on either side of him sat his court-bishop, Grimkel, and the other clergy of his household. Beyond them sat his councilors; and on the other raised seat, opposite to the king, sat his marshal Biorn, and next to him his pursuivants. At these meetings the king listened to the grievances of the people, and

redressed their wrongs. He also consulted with his councilors about the affairs of the kingdom; and talked to the bishop about the best mode of uprooting heathenism, and old customs which he thought contrary to Christianity. He likewise gathered around him wise and understanding men, who recited to him the laws of King Hakon, Athelstan's foster-son, which he confirmed or amended, as seemed most desirable; and the Bonders accepted the laws which the king proposed. So we are told by Sigvat the scald:—

“The king who at the helm guides  
His warlike ship through clashing tides,  
Now gives one law for all the land—  
A heavenly law, which long will stand.”

“On the morning to which I have alluded, King Olaye was seated thus in the midst of his court and councilors, when Marshal Biorn said, ‘What think you, king, of the strife that is between the Swedish king and you? Many men have fallen on both sides; and it appears to the people, that it would be best for you to send messengers to the Swedish king to propose a reconciliation be-

tween you. Many who are about the Swedish king will doubtless support the proposal, for it will be a gain alike to both countries.'

"Then the king said, 'It is fair, Biorn, that the advice thou hast given should be carried out by thyself; so that thine shall be the honor, and thine the peril of the undertaking. Moreover, it belongs to thy office to declare to the multitude what I wish to have told.'

"A few days afterward Biorn set out on horseback with eleven followers, having first received from Olave's hand a gold-mounted sword and a gold ring, the king desiring him to go first to Earl Ronald and to give them to him as tokens from Olave; 'and,' added he, 'this thy errand I will think well fulfilled, if thou hearest the Swedish king's own words, be they Yea or Nay.'

"Biorn and his friends were cordially welcomed by Earl Ronald; but on learning their errand, and that Biorn was even charged by Olave to ask the king's daughter in marriage, Ronald replies, 'What hast thou done, Biorn, that King Olave

wishes thy death ? for our king is too proud to receive such a message without visiting thee with his heavy wrath and displeasure.'

"Biorn assured him that King Olave was his good friend, but that he was full of daring, and that hitherto his plans had always succeeded ; 'Neither will I turn back,' said he, 'without delivering my message to the Swedish king, unless death prevent me.'

"Ingeborg then urged her husband to aid the marshal in his designs, saying, she would rather run the risk of losing their power and property, than that it should be said that the message of King Olave was neglected from fear of the Swedish king. Earl Ronald accordingly promised Biorn his aid and support.

"Now there happened to be in Biorn's suite an Icelandic scald, named Hiallste, who was a wise man, and who had friends at the Swedish court. He offered to go thither first alone, and to ascertain what were the king's inclinations in this matter ; 'and,' said he, 'I am not a man of Norway, so the Swedes can have nothing to say to me.'

" This idea being approved of, Hiallte set out for Upsal, bearing tokens from Ingeborg to Ingegird, the Swedish king's daughter, who was her friend. Olaf of Sweden, although proud and haughty, like his mother Sigrid, was very partial to learned and traveled men, and welcomed the Icelandic scald as a frequent guest in his palace. Here he had an opportunity of getting well acquainted with the Princess Ingegird, to whom he spoke often in praise of the Norwegian king; and, finding that she listened to his discourse, he ventured at last to hint Olave's desire to make her his queen. She entreated him to be cautious how he mentioned the matter to her father, who hated the king of Norway. He soon discovered that her fears were only too well founded; for the subject having been barely alluded to one day in the king's presence, he got into a rage, and said, ' that rather than give his daughter in marriage to that thick Olave, he would proceed to Norway in the depth of winter, and lay waste the land with fire and sword, so punish them for their rebellion.'

" Hiallte took an early opportunity to

send messengers to Earl Ronald, acquainting him with the state of affairs at the Swedish court; and they were intrusted with a letter to Ingeborg from the Princess Ingegird, who was so accomplished as to be able to write, instead of merely sending tokens, as was the usual custom in those days."

"How very queer," exclaimed Agnes, "to think of kings not being able to write their own letters! They must have been very stupid. Don't you think so, papa?"

"Not by any means stupid, my love," replied her father. "Many of them were very wise and clever: but at the time we speak of, very few people had an opportunity even of learning to read, and still fewer had an opportunity of learning to write. These acquirements were at that period chiefly confined to the clergy."

"I wonder," said Henry, "what Marshal Biorn did on hearing of the Swedish king's threat?"

"He vowed that he would not turn back until he had met the Swedish king, and claimed the earl's promise to accompany him to court.

“Earl Ronald said he would not go back from his word, but that he must first ascertain for himself what were the ‘Princess Ingegird’s thoughts upon the subject; so he sent to beg that she might meet him at a farm she had at some distance from Upsal. Accordingly she went thither with a large retinue, and after having entertained him and his followers at a great feast, they got into conversation about the Swedish and Norwegian kings; and she told the earl that in her opinion there was no hope of peace between them.

“‘Then,’ said the earl, ‘how wouldst thou like it, my consin, if Olave of Norway were to pay his addresses to thee? It appears to us that it would contribute much toward a settled peace if there was a relationship established between the kings; but I would not support such a matter if it were against thy inclination.’

“She replies, ‘My father disposes of my hand; but among all my relations, thou art he whose advice I would rather follow in weighty affairs. Dost thou think it advisable?’

“The earl recommended it strongly, and reckoned up many excellent achievements of King Olave’s. So having agreed with each other on the subject, they parted.

“Earl Ronald having rejoined Marshal Biorn and his men, conducted them to the house of a venerable judge named Thorngyr, who was his foster-father, and on whose judgment he placed great reliance. It was a large and stately mansion in which he lived, and when Biorn saw him seated on his high seat, with his full white beard flowing down over his breast, he thought he had never beheld so majestic a man. Earl Ronald having related to Thorngyr all that had passed, entreated his aid and counsel in the matter.

“When the earl had done speaking, Thorngyr remained silent a while, and then said, that it seemed strange to him that people of such rank and renown should have undertaken such a business without considering whether they had power to prevail with the king. ‘In my opinion,’ said he, ‘it is not less honorable to be in the number of Bonders, as I am, and have one’s words free,



and to be able to speak one's mind, even if the king be present. But I must go to the Upsal Thing, and give thee aid, so that thou mayst speak thy wishes without fear before the king.'

"Earl Ronald thanked his foster-father; after which they all armed and rode together to Upsal. There was a vast assemblage of people from all parts of Sweden at the Thing. On the first day of its meeting the king sat upon his throne, and all his court stood around him. Opposite sat Earl Ronald and Judge Thorngyr, with their men gathered before them; and behind, on the mounds and hillocks, stood the Bonder community, to hear what was said. When, according to custom, the king's affairs had been first settled, Marshal Biorn rose up, and said aloud, 'King Olave sends me here with the message, that he will offer to the Swedish king peace, and the frontiers that were, in olden times, fixed between Norway and Sweden.'

"As soon as the king perceived what was the drift of his message, he sprang up, and called out that the man should be silent,

for that 'such speeches were useless.' So Biorn sat down again. Then Earl Ronald stood up, and set forth King Olave's proposals of peace, and courtship of the Princess Ingegird; adding, that the people of West Gothland longed for peace, as their commerce and domestic comfort were alike ruined by the inroads of their neighbors.

"When the earl had done speaking, the king rose again, and reproached Ronald with having made peace with that 'fat fellow' without his consent, adding many rude expressions concerning Olave, and then sat down again."

"A few moments of silence ensued. Then rose up Thorngyr, and all the Bonders rushed together to listen to what the venerable lagman would say. At first there was a great din of people and weapons; but when the noise ceased, Thorngyr made his speech: 'Sweden's kings,' said he, 'are different in character from what they were formerly. My grandfather, Thorngyr, could well remember the Upsal king, Eric Ey-mundson, who conquered Finland, Courland, and Esthonia, and the eastern countries all

around : but he was not so proud as to refuse to listen to people who had anything to say to him. My father, again, was a long time with King Biorn, whose kingdom stood in great power, yet he was gay and sociable with his friends. I also remember King Eric the Victorious, and was with him on many a war expedition. He enlarged the Swedish dominion, and defended it manfully ; yet it was easy and agreeable to express our opinions to him. But the king we now have allows no man to presume to talk with him, unless it be what he desires to hear. He wants to have possession of Norway, which no Swedish king before him ever desired, and therewith he brings war and distress on many a man. Now it is our will, that thou, King Olaf, make peace with the Norway king, Olave the Thick, and marry thy daughter Ingegird to him. If thou wilt reconquer the east countries which thy forefathers had under their rule, then will we all follow thee to the war ; but we will not suffer law and peace to be disturbed by thy pride and anger. We desire therefore to know what resolution thou wilt take.'

"Then the whole people approved, with shouts and clash of arms, the lagman's speech."

"I am sorry to interrupt you, papa," said Margaret, "but I want to know what a lagman means."

"A lagman," replied her father, "was a district judge, whose business was not only to explain and to administer the laws to the people, but also to be the spokesman of the people at the Thing, or Parliament, just as we have seen it done at this Upsal Thing by the venerable Thorngyr."

"And what was the proud king's answer?" inquired Henry.

"He rose up, and said he would yield to the wishes of the Bonders, as all kings of Sweden had done before him, and he gave full power to Earl Ronald to conclude this marriage affair. So the people were pacified, and Marshal Biorn returned home to Norway, and acquainted the king with his success, which pleased Olave much.

"Early in the following spring King Olave set out, with a great suite, for the frontiers, where, according to agreement, he was to

meet his bride; but after having waited there some time in vain, he was greeted by the unwelcome news, that the Swedish king was about to break his solemn promise, by wedding his daughter Ingegird to Jarisleif, the king of Russia, who had sent ambassadors to Upsal, demanding her in marriage. Olave was greatly disappointed at this, for he had set his heart upon marrying the Princess Ingegird, of whom he had heard great encomiums; and he proposed raising an army to avenge himself for the insult offered by the king of Sweden.

“While thus meditating revenge, an embassy reached him from Earl Ronald, acquainting him that another daughter of the Swedish monarch’s, named Astrid, who had long ago been driven from court by the cruelty of her step-mother, was at that time visiting his wife, the Countess Ingeborg; and adding, that if Olave chose to marry her, he would arrange the whole matter, without referring to her father, and also pledge himself that she should have the same portion as had been promised to her sister.

“As Astrid was far renowned for beauty, mildness, and good sense, Olave agreed to the proposal, and soon afterward met the earl on the frontiers, where his marriage with Astrid was celebrated without her father being consulted on the matter.

“On hearing this, the Swedish king was highly incensed against Earl Ronald, and vowed to be revenged on him. Shortly afterward he summoned Ingegird to his presence, and told her it was his pleasure that she should marry King Jarisleif. Ingegird at once bowed submissively to her father's will; but, turning to the Russian ambassadors, who were present, she begged that she might be allowed to name her own bride-gift—for you must know that in those days every king, on his marriage, settled some domain on his wife, who thenceforward held it as her own absolute possession. The ambassadors acceding to Ingegird's request, she named the town and earldom of Ladoga as her portion. Then, addressing her father, she said, “If I go to Russia, I must choose the man in Sweden whom I think most suitable to accompany me; and I stipulate that

he shall have the same rank and privileges there that he has here.' The king and the ambassadors agreed to this, and gave their hands upon it in confirmation of their promise.

" 'And who,' inquired the king, 'is the man that thou wilt take with thee as thy attendant?'

" 'That man,' replied she, 'is my relation, Earl Ronald.'

" Her father looked angry on hearing this. 'I have resolved,' said he, 'to reward Earl Ronald in a different way, for his treason against me in bringing my daughter to Norway, and giving her to that fellow who is my greatest enemy. I shall hang him up this summer.'

" Then Ingegird besought her father not to break the promise which he had so solemnly made, and he ended by pledging himself that the earl should be suffered to depart out of Sweden in peace, provided he never appeared in the king's presence, or came back to Sweden during his lifetime. The princess hastened to acquaint Earl Ronald with what had passed; and having

equipped a vessel for the purpose, he and Ingeborg, with their retinue, embarked in the princess's suite for Russia, where she was married to King Jarisleif. It was not for her own benefit that Ingegird had asked for the town and earldom of Ladoga, both of which she bestowed upon Earl Ronald, who became a celebrated man in Russia.

“As for her father, the Swedish people were so irritated by his falsehood and treachery, that they rose up in rebellion against him, and were not pacified until he gave them a pledge of his sincerity by sharing his throne and authority with his son Anund, and also entered into a treaty of amity with Olave, King of Norway. So ended the feud between these two neighbors.

“King Olave, being now at peace with his enemies, gave his whole thoughts to the religious condition of his people, among whom great multitudes who were professedly Christians, were heathens at heart.

“There came a bad season, during which corn was very scarce; and the king learned that at Drontheim great sacrifices had been made, and the altar of Thor had been



sprinkled with the blood of horses and cattle, and prayer made to the gods for a good season. Olave was very much displeased on hearing this; and, taking a large party of armed men with him, he surrounded the house of a wealthy Bonder named Olver, where the idolaters were assembled for their mid-winter feast; and, seizing the ringleaders, he executed some, maimed others, and imprisoning or plundering the rest, terrified the multitude by his severity. But it was in the Uplands that the most resolute idolaters were to be found. Accordingly he resolved to go thither, and to root out heathenism from its mountain fastnesses. One evening he approached a lovely valley imbosomed in hills, with a clear stream running through it, and a beautiful hamlet, named Loar, lying along the banks of the rivulet.

“‘It would be a pity,’ said Olave to his companions, ‘for so beautiful a hamlet to be wasted with fire and sword.’

“And he went on a little further to a farm-house called Naas, where he spent the night in a loft. This farm-house, although

built of wood, is said to have been standing within these few years,—so carefully was it preserved from a reverence to St. Olave. On the following day he summoned the people of the hamlet to a Thing, exhorting them to embrace Christianity; and the simple villagers submitted to his will, consenting to destroy their idol houses, and to receive instruction from the Christian priests by whom Olave was accompanied. The other inhabitants of the valley, however, were far less easily wrought upon, either by entreaty or threats. There was a man dwelling in it named Gudbrand, who was like a king in the valley, so wealthy was he and powerful. On hearing of Olave's arrival at Loar, and of his doings there, Gudbrand sent out a message token, and summoned all the men in the valley to meet him at a farm called Hundthorp. They crowded to him in great numbers, and he addressed them with animation, telling how Olave wanted to force upon them a new faith and to break in pieces their gods. 'He says,' added Gudbrand, 'that he has a far greater and more powerful God than

gurs; and I marvel that the earth does not burst asunder beneath his feet, or that our god lets him go about unpunished, when he dares to talk of such things. I know this for certain, that if we carry Thor, who has always stood by us, out of our temple here, Olave's God will melt away, and he and his men fall to nothing as soon as Thor looks upon them.' Then the Bonders all shouted as with one voice that Olave should perish if he attempted to force his new faith upon them; and the people crowding to them from all parts, they advanced in a large body to meet the king. The rain was falling heavily when Olave advanced with his men to address them. He told them how the people in many neighboring villages had broken down their altars, and turned from idols to serve the true God, who had made heaven and earth; and he besought them to follow so good an example.

"When the king had sat down, Gudbrand replied: 'We know nothing of him whom thou speakest about. Dost thou call him God, whom neither thou nor any one else can see? But we have a God who can be

seen every day, although he is not out to-day, because the weather is wet; but he is terrible and very grand; and I expect that fear will curdle thy very blood, when he comes into the Thing. But since thou sayest thy God is so great, let him cause that to-morrow we have a cloudy day, but without rain, and then let us meet again.'

"The king accordingly returned to his lodging, after having given the Bonders a hostage in exchange for Gudbrand's son, who was committed into his care. In the evening he inquired of this youth what their God was like. He replied that he bore the likeness of Thor; had a hammer in his hand; was of great size, but hollow within; and had a high stand upon which he stood when he was carried out. 'Neither gold nor silver is wanting about him; and every day he consumes four cakes of bread, besides meat.' After this the youth went to bed; but Olave watched all night in prayer, for, in spite of his rude zeal and superstitious piety, he knew the power of prayer, and trusted in God alone for success.

"On the following day the weather proved

to be just what had been desired by Gudbrand. When the Thing was assembled, the bishop stood up in his robes, and having his episcopal staff in his hands. He spoke earnestly to the Bonders concerning the true faith; and they listened to his words. Afterward rose up one of their chiefs, named Thord Istromaga, and replied: 'Many things we are told of by this man with the crooked staff in his hands; but since ye say, comrades, that your God is so powerful, tell him to make it clear sunshine to-morrow forenoon, and then we shall meet here again, and do one of two things,—either agree with you about this business, or fight with you.' So they parted.

"The king passed this second night also in prayer, beseeching God of his goodness and mercy to deliver him, and keep him from evil. When the day dawned, he attended divine service, and after breakfast he went to the Thing. When he came there some Bonders had already arrived, and they saw a great crowd advancing and bearing among them a huge idol glittering with gold and silver. When the Bonders who

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were at the Thing saw it, they started up and bowed themselves down before the idol. Then was it set down upon the Thing field; and on one side of it sat the Bonders, and on the other the king and his people.

“Then Gudbrand stood up, and said: ‘Where now, king, is thy God? I think he will now carry his head lower; and neither thou, nor the man with the crooked staff, whom ye call bishop, who sits beside thee there, look so bold to-day as usual; for now our god who rules over all is come, and looks upon you with an angry eye, so that ye are terrified at his glance. Throw away now all your opposition, and believe in the god who holds your fate in his hands.’

“Now there was standing close beside the king one of his guards, named Kolbein Sterki, (the Strong,) a tall, stout man, who was girt with a sword, and held a huge club in his hands. The king whispered to him, ‘If it come to pass in the course of my speech that the Bonders look away from their idol, then strike him as hard as thou canst with thy club.’ Then rising up, Olave addressed himself to Gudbrand: ‘Much hast

thou talked to us this morning, and greatly hast thou wondered that thou canst not see our God ; forgetting that he is a spirit, and cannot be beheld by the eyes of mortal man ; he is not like unto thy god, who is both blind and deaf, and can neither save himself nor others, and cannot even move about without being carried. Our God can do what he listeth both in heaven and on earth ; and if ye will turn your eyes to the east,—behold, his messenger advancing in great light !

“ At this moment the sun was rising up in all its glory, and every eye turned toward the region which had been named by the king. Kolbein lost not an instant in striking their idol so vigorously with his club, that the gilded monster burst asunder, and forth from its interior ran out innumerable mice and reptiles. The Bonders were so affrighted, that many of them ran away ; but the king sent after them commanding their return, as he wanted to speak with them : so they came back, and the Thing was again seated. Then Olave rose up and said : ‘ I do not understand what your noise and run-

ning mean. Ye see yourselves what your god can do, the idol ye adorned with gold and silver, and who were the creatures that dayly consumed the meat and bread ye provided for it. Do ye not see how ill it is to trust to such idols? and will ye not abandon this folly? Take up the gold and ornaments that are lying strewed about on the grass, and give them to your wives and daughters; but never hang them hereafter upon stock or stone. Here are now two conditions for you to choose,—either accept Christianity, or fight this very day: and the victory be to them to whom our God may give it.’

“Then Gudbrand stood up and said, ‘that since their god had proved so worthless a one, they would believe in the God whom the Christians worshiped; and so all the people of the valley professed Christianity. Bishop Sigurd baptized Gudbrand and his son; and on Olave’s departure, he left behind him teachers; so they who met as enemies, parted as friends. Gudbrand, moreover, built a church in the valley.

“Olave proceeded afterward to another



part of the Uplands, called Raumarige, where a multitude of armed Bonders came against him; but he quickly subdued and put them to flight: whereupon the old chronicler quaintly observes, 'that they were forced by this battle into a better disposition, and immediately received Christianity; and the king scoured the whole district, and did not leave it until all the people were made Christians.'

"Before quitting this Upland region, Olave went to visit his mother Aasta, who was now a widow with three little boys, the children of Sigurd Syr. Olave, who was very mild and playful, unless when excited by zeal or anger, called his brothers around him, and placed the two eldest, Guttorm and Halfdan, upon his knees, and by way of amusement made a wry face at the children, who were frightened, and gladly made their escape from him. Then Aasta placed upon his knee her youngest boy, Harald, who was three years old. The king made a wry face at him also; but the little fellow, instead of being frightened, looked at him boldly in the face. Olave then took him

by the hair and pulled it; upon which the boy seized the king's whiskers and gave them a tug.'

" 'Ha! my little friend,' said Olave, 'thou wilt one day be a bold and revengeful man!'

"The following day the king was walking with his mother about the farm, and they came to a play-ground where Guttorm and Halfdan were building mud houses and barns, which were, they pretended, full of corn, and sheep, and cattle. Close beside them was a pool, in which Harald was busy with chips of wood, sailing them in sport along the edge. The king asked him what these were; and he answered, 'These were his ships of war.' The king laughed, and said, 'The time may come, my boy, when thou wilt command ships.' Then inquired Olave of Guttorm; 'What wouldst thou like best to have?'

" 'Corn-land,' replied he.

" 'And how much wouldst thou have?'

" 'I would have the whole ness that goes out into the lake sown with corn every summer.' Now on that ness were ten farms.

"The king replies, 'There would be a

great deal of corn there.' And turning to Halfdan, he asked, 'And what wouldst thou like to have?'

" 'Cows,' he replied.

" 'How many wouldst thou like to have?'

" 'I would have so many, that when they went to the lake to be watered, they stood as tight round the lake as possible.'

" 'That would be a great house-keeping,' said the king; 'and therein ye take after your father.'

" 'And what wouldst thou like best to have?' inquired Olave of the little Harald.

" 'House-servants.'

" 'And how many wouldst thou have?'

" 'O! so many would I have, as would eat up my brother Halfdan's cows at a single meal.'

" The king laughed, and turning to Aasta observed: 'Here, mother, thou art bringing up a king.' "

" I should like to know what became of that little fellow," said Henry Daleson to his father. " Can you tell us anything more about him, papa? "

" Yes, I could tell you a great deal that

is interesting about him ; for he became a most distinguished man, and is celebrated not only in Norwegian, but also in English history. At present, however, I shall have only time to finish the story of St. Olave.

“ He had now reigned about ten years ; and being at peace at home, he sent some forces to the Orkney Isles, and brought them entirely under his rule. He also made an attempt to obtain the sovereignty of Iceland, which, however, was refused by the Icelanders, who said that they would not consent to pay him any kind of scatt or service. Olave did not show any displeasure at their refusal, but sent a pressing invitation to some of the principal men in the island to come to him on a friendly visit, acquainting them, through his messenger, that they must not excuse themselves, if they regarded his ‘friendship as worth anything.’ After some consultation among the chieftains, they resolved to comply so far with the king’s request as to send each one a son, or a brother, to the Norwegian court. Accordingly four or five of their nearest relatives accompanied the king’s messen-

gers back to Norway ; and I mention this, because it is to two of these young Icelanders that we are indebted for the story of St. Olave. The name of one is not unknown to you, Egill Hall, whose grandfather Sidu, with all his household, were, as you may remember, the first Icelandic converts to Christianity."

"O yes," said Margaret ; " I recollect the slaughtering priest Thandbrand and his mission quite well."

" The other," resumed Mr. Daleson, " was Snorro, a son of the *godar* or chief judge in Iceland. These two youths remained with St. Olave until his death ; and it was from the lips of their children that, about thirty or forty years afterward, this and many other Norse stories were written."

" Did Olave succeed in getting Iceland under his rule ?" inquired Mrs. Daleson.

" No, he did not," replied her husband ; " for about this time, Canute the Great, (of Denmark,) having conquered England, turned his eyes toward Norway, and laid claim to it, on the plea that his father,

King Swein, had won it from Olaf Tryggvesson at the battle of Svoldär.

“The Norwegian king was by no means pleased, when a magnificent embassy arrived from England, and requested an interview with him. On their appearing before him they made known their errand; namely, ‘that King Canute considers all Norway as his property, and insists that his forefathers before him possessed that kingdom; but that he offered peace to King Olave, if he would come to England, and receive his kingdom as a fief from Canute, and become his vassal.’ Olave was exceedingly indignant at this proposal, and said that Gorm the Old had been satisfied with the small kingdom of Denmark; and that now his grandson, after getting possession of England, must needs have Norway also; adding tauntingly: ‘Will Canute eat up all the kail in England? He shall do so, and reduce that land to the condition of a desert, before I lay my head in his hands, or show him any other kind of vassalage. Now ye shall tell him my words: “I will defend Norway with battle-ax and sword as long as life is given

me, and I will pay scatt to no man for my kingdom." When this message was brought to Canute, he said, 'King Olaf guesses wrong, if he thinks I shall eat up all the kail in England; for I will let him see there is something else than kail under my ribs; and cold kail it shall be for him.'

"Canute began forthwith to make great preparations for his intended attack upon Norway; and Olave had now no leisure to think of aught but the best way to oppose his formidable foe. He entered into alliance with his brother-in-law, Anund, King of Sweden; and with their united forces they sailed to Zealand, and gained a great victory over Canute close to the river Helga, A. D. 1025. Canute's life, on this occasion, was saved by the daring valor of his brother-in-law, Earl Ulf. The great monarch was much enraged at this defeat; and a few evenings afterward his ill-humor was shown in a way so characteristic of those rude, uncouth times, that I must tell you about it. He was playing at chess with his brother-in-law, and, through some oversight, lost a knight to his antagonist. The king insisted on the knight

being replaced, when the earl, starting up to leave the apartment, overthrew the board, and on his reaching the door the king exclaimed, 'Dost thou run, cowardly Ulf?' To which the other answered, 'You would have run further at the river Helga, if I had not come to your help against those daring Norsemen.'

"Canute, superior as he was in sense and goodness to the men of his age, could not control his own evil passions on this occasion; and on the following morning he said to one of his attendants, 'Go and stab Ulf dead.' The man returned to tell him that Ulf had fled to the church of St. Lucius. Then Canute addressed himself to his chamberlain, Ivar White, 'Go thou, and kill the earl.' The chamberlain obeyed, and slew the earl within the choir of the church. 'Thou didst well,' observed Canute, on learning that his order had been obeyed. Afterward, by way of expiation, he bestowed large property upon the church, and paid a blood-fine of two provinces to his widowed sister. How ill-understood must the glorious gospel of peace have been in those days,



when even Canute the Great thought he could thus atone for a most atrocious crime !

“ Meanwhile, Olave and Anund were encamped on the shores of Zealand, whither they had led captive a crowd of Danes ; and it happened one night that two Icelanders being on watch, heard much lamentation among the prisoners, who lay bound upon the shore. One of them, Tove Valgautson, said it made him ill to hear such distress, and asked his companion, Egill Hall, to go with him, and let loose these unhappy beings. They accordingly cut the cords, and let the people escape. King Olave was extremely angry when he heard of this, and threatened to punish the two men severely : but on Egill's falling sick soon afterward, he relented so far as to visit him ; and we are told that he laid his hands upon the part which was diseased and prayed, whereon the pain immediately ceased.”

“ Do you believe that to have been really the case, papa ? ” inquired Margaret ; “ it must have been a miracle then.”

“ As for the *fact* itself,” replied Mr. Daleson, “ I can only relate it to you as it has

been handed down to us by the old Norwegian chroniclers, who, it must be owned, were very much addicted to the marvelous; as for the gift of healing, which was claimed by St. Olave, and which was supposed during many centuries to reside in some royal races, I think it most questionable whether such a power was ever inherited by any race of men. So strong, however, is the force of popular superstition in such matters, that even in the eighteenth century our illustrious countryman, Dr. Johnson, being in his childhood grievously afflicted by disease, was brought by his mother to Queen Anne, for the purpose of being healed by her royal touch. The attempt in this instance proved a failure, as he remained a sufferer to the end of his days.

“Gloomy days were now approaching for the Norwegian monarch. Canute, having been reinforced by a large body of English under the celebrated Earl Godwin, gained a great victory over Olave, who, however, was of too bold a spirit to be discouraged by the loss of a single battle; but the affections of his subjects were by this time alienated

from him, the Bonders being displeased at his relentless persecution of heathenism, to which many of them were still attached; and the Jarls were not less annoyed by his resolute determination to punish evil-doers, no matter what might be their rank. Before Olave's time it was a common custom for the great men of Norway to go out in warships, and to maraud and plunder even in their own country: but Olave abolished this barbarous system; and if any offended in this respect, even if they were the sons of powerful men, he did not spare them at all. Neither entreaties nor gold could save them from punishment. So we are told by the scald:—

“ ‘They who on viking cruises rove,  
With gifts of red gold often strove  
To buy their safety—but our chief  
Had no compassion for the thief.  
He made the bravest lose his head,  
Who a life of plundering led;  
And his just sword gave peace to all,  
Sparing no robber, great or small.’ ”

“ Canute had many spies in Norway, who told him how ill the people were affected toward Olave; and he lost no time in gain-

ing their favor by costly presents and fair promises, which proved so successful, that, on King Canute landing at Drontheim, he was chosen king of Norway by acclamation, and Olave found himself deserted by all save a small band of trusty followers. His heart, however, never quailed, as we are told by the poet Sigvat:—

“ ‘Our men are few, our ships are small,  
While England’s king is strong in all;  
But yet our king is not afraid—  
O! never be such king betray’d!  
Let’s suceor him with sword in hand:  
'Tis money that betrays our land.’

Olave felt, however, that it was in vain to contend with a handful of men against so many foes; therefore he acquainted his followers with his purpose of quitting Norway for the present, intending, as he said, to ‘return to the country and regain his kingdom, if God should grant him longer life.’ He then dismissed to their own homes all those who had families and farms to take care of, entreating them to let him know of any events which might happen in Norway; and taking with him his Queen As-

trid, he sailed for Russia, where they were received in the kindest manner by her sister Queen Ingegird and King Jarisleif. They entreated Olave to give up all thoughts of Norway, and to accept as his kingdom the eastern part of Russia, beyond the Wolga, where the people were still heathens; but his heart turned with unceasing longing toward Norway. Meanwhile he passed much of his time in prayer, and besought God that he would do for him what seemed to him best.

"A curious anecdote has been preserved concerning this portion of his life, which marks his deep reverence for the Lord's day.

"It happened one Sunday, that, as Olave sat at the dinner-table, he had fallen into such deep thought, that he did not observe how time went. In one hand he had a knife, and in the other a piece of firewood from which he cut splinters from time to time. One of his attendants stood before him with a bowl of water in his hands, and seeing what the king was about, ventured to remind him that the morrow would be

**Monday.** Olave, after looking at him for a moment, ordered a lighted candle to be brought him, swept together all the shavings he had made, set them on fire, and let them burn upon his naked hand; showing thereby how much he repented even of the heedless breaking of God's commandment. When Olave had been about a year in Russia, tidings were brought him that Norway was in a state of the utmost confusion, owing to Canute's deputy having been drowned; and that many were crying out for their own king. In vain did Jarisleif and Ingegird try to dissuade him from attempting to regain his crown. He resolved to set his foot on Norwegian soil, and to leave the issue in God's hands. Accordingly he sailed for Sweden with two hundred men; and on his landing there, he was gladly welcomed by his brother-in-law Anund. Many of his own friends also gathered about him to give him aid. The most distinguished of these was Olave's half-brother Harald, who, although a mere stripling, was already known as a brave and daring youth. He led six hundred men from the Uplands

across the Swedish forests to join his brother Olave."

"Was that the same," inquired Henry, "who, when he was a little child, gave a tug to King Olave's whiskers?"

"The very same," replied his father; "the two brothers met in Dalecarlia, and very joyous was their greeting. They advanced without delay toward Norway, gathering new forces as they went along. On coming to a narrow pass in the mountains, King Olave saw before him two very tall stout men, fully armed, with about thirty followers. They saluted him, and he inquired who they were. 'Our names,' replied they, 'are Gauka Thorer and Afarfaste; we are robbers, and desire to follow thee in this war, for we have never been in any regular battle, and are curious to see one.' Olave replied that he had a great inclination to take them into his service. 'But,' said he, 'are ye Christian men?'

"Gauka Thorer replied that he was neither Christian nor heathen: 'I and my comrades have no faith but in ourselves, our own strength, and the luck of victory;

and with this faith we slip on sufficiently well.'

"The king replied, 'A great pity it is that such fine fellows do not believe in Christ their Redeemer.' Thorer replied, 'Is there any Christian man, king, in thy army, who stands so high in the air as we two brothers?' The king besought them to be baptized into the true faith, 'and then,' said he, 'I will advance you to great dignities; but if you will not do so, return to your former vocation.' Thereupon they both left the king's presence, and joining the forest men in the rear, followed the troops.

"King Olave was usually cheerful and talkative to the men who were about him; but on reaching the ridge which overlooked Norway, he became silent and sad, so that Bishop Grimkel asked him what ailed him. 'As I just now looked over Norway,' replied Olave, 'it came into my mind how many happy days I have had in that land. It appeared to me at first as if I saw over all the Drontheim country, and then over all Norway; and the longer I looked, the fur-



ther, methought, I saw, until I beheld the whole wide world, both land and sea.'

"On reaching the fertile district of Værdal, (Green Valley,) Olave learned that the Bonders were advancing in great force against him; so he halted, and, mustering his men, found that he had about three thousand men. On hearing, however, that nine hundred of these were heathens, he refused, even in this critical hour, to make use of their services. 'We must not,' says he, 'put our confidence in numbers, but in God alone must we trust; for through his power and favor alone can we be victorious, and I will not mix heathen people with my own.' The heathens, on hearing this, held a council among themselves, after which four hundred of them agreed to be baptized, and the remainder returned to their own land. Among the former were the two robber-brothers, who, after having been taught and baptized, were placed in the front rank of the order of battle, in advance of King Olave's banner. He then commanded all his men to paint upon their helmet and shields a white cross, whereby they might know each other in the

field, and chose for the war-cry these words, 'Forward, forward, Christian-men! cross-men! king's-men!'

"One of the chiefs having proposed to burn all the houses of those who were in arms against the king, so as to terrify the Bonders into submission, Olave nobly replied: 'The Bonders have well deserved that it should be done to them as ye desire: they also know that I have formerly done so: but then I proceeded against them with fire and sword because they rejected the true faith, and betook themselves to sacrifices. We then had God's honor to defend. But this treason against their sovereign is a much less grievous crime, although it does not become men who have any manhood in them to break the faith and vows they have sworn to me. It is, however, far easier for me to spare those who have dealt ill with me than those whom God hates. I will, therefore, that my people proceed gently, and commit no unnecessary ravages.'

"That night the whole army lay down under their shields, and the king rested in the midst of them. He, however, slept but

little, and passed most of the night in prayer. Toward morning a slumber fell on him; but he was suddenly awakened by a chieftain named Finn, who told him that the Bonders' army was advancing with raised banners, and that the multitude seemed very great. 'Wherefore,' said the king, 'didst thou not suffer me to enjoy my dream?'

" 'It is no time for slumbering, sire,' replied Finn; 'but what was the dream thou art so loth to lose?'

" 'Methought,' replied the king, 'I saw a very high ladder, upon which I went so high that heaven was open to me; and when you awoke me I had just reached the highest step.' Finn said the dream did not seem so good to him as it did to Olave, as it portended death.

"The king now rose up, and briefly addressed his men, urging them to advance boldly against the enemy, for their cause was good; and that although their numbers were fewer than those of the enemy, yet victory was in God's hands. 'This,' added he, 'I solemnly declare, that I shall not quit the field—choosing either death or

victory ; and I pray God that the lot of the two may befall me which he sees most for my advantage.'

"The king's speech was received with loud applause by his men, who were eager for the battle. Before advancing, however, Olave turned to his brother Harald, and advised him to retire from the field, as he was yet but a child in years. Harald replies, 'Certainly I shall be in the battle, for I am not so weak that I cannot handle a sword ; and none is more willing than I am to give the Bonders a blow ; so I shall go with my comrades from the Uplands.' Thereon he, being a poet, sang aloud the following lines :—

" 'Our army's wing, where I shall stand,  
I will hold good with heart and hand ;  
My mother's eye shall joy to see  
A batter'd, blood-stain'd shield from me.  
The brisk young scald should gayly go  
Into the fray, give blow for blow,  
Cheer on his men, gain inch by inch,  
And from the spear-point never flinch.'

"Harald got his will, and was allowed to be in the battle, where he was bold and brave as a lion.

“As for King Olave, he is described to us by the chronicler as being ‘clad in a coat of ringmail, with a gold-mounted’ helmet on his head,—holding in one hand a white shield on which the holy cross was inlaid in gold, and in the other a lance, which to the present day stands beside the altar in Christ Church. In his belt he had a sword, which was remarkably sharp, and of which the handle was worked with gold.’ Soon did the enemy’s war-cry resound, ‘Forward, forward, Bondermen!’ and gallantly was it responded to by Olave and his men, crying out, ‘Forward, forward! Christ-men! cross-men! king’s men!’ Both armies fought gallantly. At first it seemed as though victory would be on Olave’s side, and the Bonders quailed before his kingly glance. So we are told by the scald:—

“‘I think I saw them shrink with fear,  
 Who would not shrink from foeman’s spear,  
 When Olave’s lion eye was cast  
 On them, and call’d up all the past.  
 Clear as the serpent’s eye—his look  
 No Drontheim man could stand, but shook  
 Beneath its glance, and skulk’d away,  
 Knowing his king,—and cursed the day.’

“Among those who fell on the king’s side were the brothers Gauka Thorer and Afar-faste, but not until they had performed prodigies of valor in his service. As for Olave, we are told that he fought desperately, and was always found in the thickest part of the combat; but just as he was striking down one of his foes, the stroke of an ax fell upon his neck, and hewed him to the ground. His sword fell from his hand, and the only word he uttered was a prayer for mercy.

“Thus fell King Olave at the battle of Stiklestad, on the 26th of July, 1030. His death created such a panic among his men, that they fled in confusion from the field: nor were the Bonders free from terror when they found that they had slain their king. His body was at first privately buried by his friends, but the people quickly came to regard him as a martyr and a saint. His remains were consequently removed with great pomp to St. Clement’s Church in Drontheim, and reinterred by his faithful friend, Bishop Grimkel. So great was the fame of King Olave’s sanctity, that it was

even rumored that miracles were wrought at his tomb; and the day appointed to be observed annually in his memory is still kept by the Norwegian Church as one of the greatest of their Church days. This, however, is far less remarkable than the fact, that Olave's memory as a saint has been preserved in many other countries besides his own. Even in England, where his earliest victories were won, a great many churches were called by his name; and at the present moment one cannot walk through Southwark, and look at St. Olave's church, without being reminded of the gallant young Norseman, who, about eight hundred and forty years ago, carried that place by assault, and then restored to Etheldred his capital."

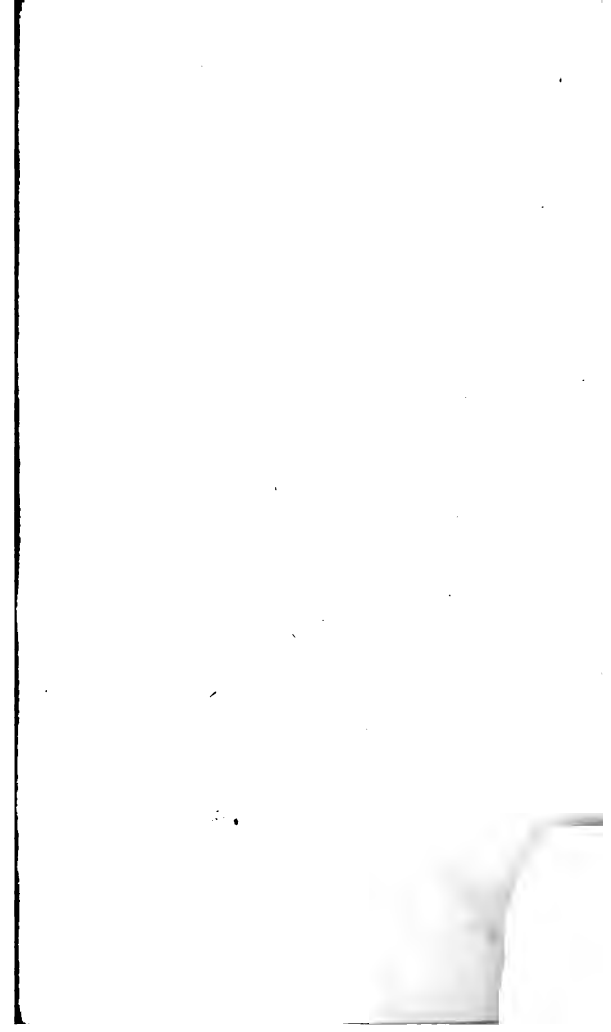
"Well!" observed Mrs. Daleson, "I must allow that Olave the Saint was not only a great man, but also, considering the times in which he lived, a holy and a good one too."

"Certainly," replied her husband, "his closing days were those of a 'hero and a saint.'"

"But what became of that brave young Harald?" inquired Henry.

"He was severely wounded at the battle of Stiklestad," replied Mr. Daleson; "but my story this evening has been longer than I intended; so I must not begin to talk about Harald, whose life was far too interesting and eventful to be treated in a postscript. It must be, therefore, reserved for another evening."







HARALD HARDRADE.

See page 228

## The Story of Harald Hardråde.

THE family party at Wetherby Manor were gathered around their evening fireside, and every face bore a look of pleased expectation, when Mr. Daleson proposed telling the story of Harald Hardråde, the youthful hero of Stiklestad, whose deeds, he said, had been celebrated in eastern as well as in western story.

“It was,” said he, “about four o’clock in the afternoon of the 29th July, 1030, when a tall and slender youth of fifteen slowly left the field of Stiklestad, which at that moment was a scene of rout and slaughter. His waving locks were of a golden hue, but they were stained with blood; and his limbs seemed scarcely able to support him on his way, although the proud impatient glance of his blue eye told how unwillingly he left the field of battle. Happily for him the sky was darkened by an eclipse of the sun, which began during the heat of the combat,

and which made it no easy matter at that moment to recognize either friend or foe. Had it been otherwise, many a spear might have been stretched out against Harald, the brother of King Olave, who had just been slain.

“By the side of Harald walked a brave earl from Orkney, named Ragnvald Bruseson, (or, as we would call him, Ronald the son of Bruce,) who had been a most devoted adherent of Olave, and now accompanied his youthful brother, whom he led into the neighboring forest, and brought to the house of a friendly Bonder, to whose care he committed him, charging the peasant to have him carefully tended until his wounds were healed. Here Harald lay concealed until he was in a fit condition to travel, when the Bonder's son attended him on his journey eastward over the mountain ridge which separates Norway from Sweden. They traveled by all the least frequented forest paths, so that their journey was gloomy enough; but Harald was so blithesome on finding himself once more in the free open air, that he sang out the following verses:—

“My wounds were bleeding as I rode;  
And down the vale the rebels strode,  
Slaying, relentless, with the sword,  
The followers of their rightful lord.  
From wood to wood I crept along,  
Unnoticed by the Bonder throng;  
“Who knows,” thought I, “a day may come,  
My name shall yet be great at home?””

Thus did he go along, full of hope for the future. Having met Ragnyald Brusesson and some others of King Olave's men in Sweden, they sailed together for Russia, where they were cordially welcomed by Jarislief and Ingegird, in whose country Harald remained several years, doing good service to Jarisleif as opportunity offered: but hearing much about the splendor and power of Constantinople, he resolved to visit that city; and accordingly he bent his adventurous course to the brilliant court of Zoë, who at that time ruled, together with her husband Michael Calaphates, over the Greek empire. On his arrival there he presented himself before the empress, who gave him a very favorable reception, and placed him in her body-guard, of which he speedily became the chief. Its members were called Vaeringers,

or the Defenders. This corps was composed chiefly of Norsemen, and Harald's courage and liberality soon made him the idol of his men. His great popularity and success in war awoke envy in the breast of the Greek general, Gyrger, who did what he could to ruin Harald in the estimation of the empress; but Zoë looked upon him with peculiar favor, and intrusted to him the command of an expedition against the Saracens in Africa and Sicily. This was very pleasing to one of Harald's disposition, for a campaign against the Saracens was in those days full of danger and romance; for not only were they the wealthiest people in the world, but also the most noble and daring.

“Harald and his Vaeringers went first to Africa, where, we are told, they took eighty strongholds from the infidels, and gathered a vast quantity of treasure; much of which Harald sent, by trusty messengers, to the care of King Jarislief. He then went to Sicily, which was overrun by the Saracens, who had many strong castles there. Harald seated himself with his troops before one of them, whose walls were so massive, that it

seemed impossible to break into it ; and the garrison was so well provisioned, that there was no chance of starving them into submission. Harald resolved to effect by ingenuity what could not be attained by courage. It was now spring time ; and he observed daily the flight of innumerable birds from within the castle walls, which went into the neighboring woods to get food for their young. By the aid of some expert bird-catchers he caught these little wanderers, and having fastened small splinters of tarred wood to their backs, smeared the chips over with wax and sulphur, and setting fire to these combustibles, set the prisoners free. The affrighted birds flew back to their nests, which were built beneath the house roofs, which were thatched with reeds and straw. The weather being warm and dry, the fire quickly communicated itself to the roofs of the buildings, and, to the dismay and astonishment of the inhabitants, they found themselves enveloped in flames, without knowing how the fire had originated, or whence came those eddying waves of smoke by which they were almost stifled. In the

panic of the moment all who were in the castle rushed out of it, and begged for mercy of Harald, who granted to them life and liberty, and then took possession of the castle, where he and his men found themselves lodged in great comfort and splendor. But ease was not what they sought or desired. Other strong castles there were in Sicily, which they resolved to wrest out of the hands of the Saracens; and in the attainment of their object they spared neither ingenuity nor labor. One of their sieges was so curious that I must relate it to you.

“This castle was the strongest they had yet attempted to take. It belonged to a Sicilian prince, within whose fortified domain were congregated priests and monks, as well as many others who had fled thither from the Norsemen, whose name carried terror along with it in these southern lands. It seemed hopeless to take this castle by assault; so Harald, having surrounded it with his troops, resolved to starve the garrison into submission. Soon after the siege had begun Harald fell sick, and betook himself



to his bed. He had his tent pitched at a little distance from the camp, that he might not be disturbed by the clang of arms and the clamor of armed men. His men went usually in companies to or from him to receive and carry his orders; and the castle people observing that there was something new going on among the Vaeringers, sent out spies to discover what this might mean. The spies brought back word that the chief of the Vaeringers was ill, so that no assault need for the present be apprehended. Meanwhile, Harald, being informed of these inquiries, resolved to turn them to some account; so the next time the spies came into the camp the Vaeringers assumed very sad countenances, and told them that their commander was so dangerously ill now, that his death was hourly expected. This was good news to the people within the fortress; nor were they sorry when, a few days later, some of the Vaeringers, on approaching the walls, told them in a parley that their chief was dead, and entreated of the priests to grant him burial in the consecrated ground of the castle chapel. This was readily granted;

and the priests expecting very rich presents for their church from these wealthy Norsemen, came forth in a body, dressed in all their robes, to meet the corpse; bearing along with them crosses, and relics in their costly shrines, and consecrated banners, so as to form a splendid procession. The Vaeringers, on their side, lacked neither pomp nor stateliness in their arrangements. The coffin was borne aloft, and above it was a costly canopy; while many warlike banners were borne before it, and the slow measured step of the Vaeringers bespoke the sorrow they felt at their loss.

“Now when the corpse was brought within the castle gate, the Vaeringers set down the coffin right across the entry, so as to prevent the gate from being closed, and, drawing their swords, sounded to battle with all their trumpets. In one moment more Harald had leaped fully armed out of the coffin, and with an unsparing hand was dealing death on all sides of him. The whole army of Vaeringers, who had been left in the camp, came rushing on with shouts and cries, and followed their comrades within

the gate. - The monks and priests who had striven with each other who should be first to receive the offerings at the burial, were now striving much more eagerly who should first get away from the Vaeringers, for they killed every one who came in their way, whether priest or layman; and grievous was the slaughter they made before gaining possession of the fortress, which was so stored with wealth, that they gained immense riches there.

“After having spent several years in these African and Sicilian wars, Harald returned to Constantinople, where he was received with distinguished favor by the Empress Zoë; nor were his deeds unsung by the Greek poets of that day, one of whom, named Theodolphus, tells us that—

“‘Harald the Stern ne’er allow’d  
Peace to his foemen, false and proud:  
In eighteen battles, fought and won,  
The valor of the Norseman shone.’

“Harald had fought with the Moslems in Africa and Sicily, and his heart now burned to meet and conquer them in the Holy Land; so gathering around him a band of follow-

ers, he bent his course to Palestine. An Icelandic scald thus sings concerning Harald's crusade :—

“ ‘He went, the warrior bold and brave,—  
Jerusalem, the holy grave,  
And the interior of the land,  
To bring beneath the Greeks' command;  
And by the terror of his name  
Beneath his power the country came,  
Nor needed wasting fire and sword  
To yield obedience to his word.  
The Norseman brave clear'd far and wide  
Jordan's fair banks on either side;  
The robber-bands before him fled,  
And his great name was widely spread.’

“ Nor was he satisfied with these warlike deeds ; but made his reverent offering at the Saviour's tomb, and went as a pilgrim to bathe in the river Jordan.

“ On his return to Constantinople, Harald received tidings from the north, which filled him with a desire to return home ; for he heard that the Norwegians, weary of a foreign yoke, had placed their crown upon the head of St. Olave's son Magnus, who had also acquired, on the death of Hardicanute, King of Denmark, the sovereignty of that

country. Ambitious thoughts were awakened within Hardråde's breast by this news, and he gave up his command in the Greek service, with the intention of returning home. The Empress Zoë, unwilling to part with her favorite, tried in vain to dissuade him from abandoning her polished and luxurious court, for the cold and rocky fastnesses of Norway. He refused to remain, and was, perhaps, the more steadfast in his purpose, because the empress had refused him the hand of her niece Maria, whom he had sought in marriage: a rejection which had wounded and annoyed him. Zoë, finding him immovable, resolved to detain him on some charge of malversation; and she accordingly cast him into prison; but a noble Greek lady, who had in former days been cured of a grievous malady by St. Olave, now showed her gratitude by delivering his brother out of captivity, which she contrived to do by lowering ropes from the roof of a tower into the dungeon wherein Hardråde was confined. Having thus escaped, he hastened to arouse some of his trusty Vaeringers, and by their aid bore

away the beautiful Maria, whom he placed in one of his galleys, and with a chosen band rowed out into the Black Sea. Whether he discovered that Maria was unfavorable to his suit, cannot now be ascertained ; but certain it is that, before he had gone far on his way, he put the lady ashore, and sent her back with a good escort to Constantinople, desiring her to tell her relation Zoë how little power she had over Harald.

“ Harald now sailed northward, through the Sea of Azov ; and it would seem that his heart was very light during the voyage, for he composed at this time no less than sixteen songs for amusement.

“ When Harald came to Novogorod, King Jarisleif received him in the most friendly way, and restored to him the gold and other precious things which had been intrusted to his keeping, and they formed so vast and costly a treasure, that Hardråde found himself the wealthiest man in all those northern lands. He was not a sort of man, however, to value gold, except for the purpose of spending or giving it away ; and at this time it seems as if domestic happiness was

his aim, for he asked and obtained in marriage Jarisleif's daughter, Ellisof, (Elizabeth,) who proved to him a faithful and affectionate wife.

"After passing the winter at Novogorod, Hardråde's ambition prompted him to desire for himself the crown of Norway, to which, according to the laws of that period, he had as good, if not a better right than his nephew Magnus. So he set sail for Sweden; and we are told by the poet Valgard that—

" ' The fairest cargo ship e'er bore,  
From Russia's distant eastern shore,  
The gallant Harald homeward brings—  
Gold, and a fame that scald still sings.  
The ship through dashing foam he steers,  
Through the sea-rain to Sweden veers,  
And at Sigtuna's grassy shores  
His gallant vessel safely stores.'

"On landing in Sweden, Harald met Sweyn, who had, by means of King Magnus, lost the crown of Denmark, and who was therefore much incensed against him. Harald and Sweyn agreed together to attack Denmark first, and then Norway, with the purpose of gaining a kingdom for each: but

King Magnus, on hearing of this coalition, sent trusty messengers to Harald, proposing that Norway should be partitioned between his uncle and himself, and that they should also divide their movable property equally between both. Hardråde accepted the offer, and sailed to Drontheim, where he met King Magnus, and all was peacefully settled between the two relatives. The chronicler gives a curious account of the ceremonies observed on this occasion. Magnus, after having entertained Harald and sixty of his men at a splendid feast, gave to each of the guests gifts of arms or clothing. Then he placed himself before Harald, holding two sticks in his hand, and said, 'Which of these two sticks wilt thou have, my friend?'

"Harald replies, 'The one nearest me.'

" 'Then,' said King Magnus, 'with this stick I give thee half the Norwegian power, with all the scatt and duties, and all the domains thereunto belonging, with the condition that everywhere thou shalt be as lawful king in Norway as I am myself; but when we are both together in one place, I shall



be the first man in seat, service, and salutation; and if there be three of us together of equal dignity, that I shall sit in the middle, and shall have the royal tent-ground, and the royal landing-place. Thou shalt strengthen and advance our kingdom in return for making thee that man in Norway, who we never expected any man should be so long as our head was above ground.'

"Then stood up Harald Hardråde, and thanked him for the high title and dignity he had conferred upon him. Thereupon they both sat down, and were very merry together. The same evening Harald and his men returned to their ships.

"The following day King Magnus ordered the trumpets to sound to a general Thing of the people, and made known to the multitude the gift he had made to Harald. He was already known to them by fame as being the wisest and wealthiest, as well as the bravest among Norsemen; and now he stood before them, the loftiest of all in stature,—for he was seven feet high,—with a countenance full of masculine beauty, and with

his golden hair falling in profusion on his shoulders, looking so noble and king-like, that the people's hearts were speedily won by him; and Thorer Steig, the chief Bonder among them, as their spokesman, saluted him king. The same day King Harald entertained King Magnus with sixty of his men at a splendid feast in his land-tent, and the whole party were merry and glad. Toward evening King Harald ordered several caskets to be brought into the tent, and also many costly garments and valuable weapons were carried in by his men, together with other rare things. All these King Harald divided among King Magnus's men, who were at the feast; and to Thorer Steig, who had saluted him king, he gave a bowl of mountain-birch that was encircled with a silver ring, and having a silver handle, both of which were gilt; and the bowl was filled with Greek coins. He also bestowed upon him his own purple mantle, lined with white fur; promising him, at the same time, his favor and friendship. Then he had the caskets opened, and said to King Magnus, 'Yesterday you gave us a large kingdom,

which your hand had won from your and our enemies, and took us in partnership with yourself, which was well done ; and this has cost you much. Now we, on our side, have been in foreign parts, and oft in peril of life, to gather together the gold which you here see. Now, King Magnus, I will divide this with you, and let each have his equal share of it, as each has his equal share of Norway.' Then Harald had a large ox-hide spread out, and turned the gold out of the caskets upon it ; and scales and weights being brought into the tent, the gold was divided by weight between the two kings, the Norsemen looking on with wonder, for they had but little gold in their own country, and marveled how so large a store could have been gathered together by one man. One ingot having appeared about the size of a man's hand, Harald took it up, and said to Magnus in a merry tone, 'Where is the gold, friend Magnus, that thou canst show against this piece?'

• " 'So many disturbances and levies have been in the country,' replied Magnus, 'that all the gold and silver I could lay up, is

gone. I have no more gold in my possession than this ring.'

"So saying, he took the ring off his finger and gave it to Harald. Harald looked at it and said, 'That is but little gold, friend, for the man who owns two kingdoms; and yet some may doubt whether thou art rightful owner of even this ring.'

"After a moment's reflection, King Magnus replied: 'If I be not rightful owner of this ring, then I know not what I have got any right to; for my father, King Olave the Saint, gave me this ring at our last parting.'

"Then said King Harald, laughing, 'It is quite true, King Magnus, what thou sayest. Thy father gave thee this ring, but he took the ring from my father for some trifling cause; and in truth, it was not a good time for small kings in Norway, when thy father was in full power.'

"For a little while the two kings reigned together in peace; but after a time disputes arose between them, which might have ended in an open rupture but for the death of Magnus, which occurred about a year

after Harald's arrival in Norway. The people were very sorry for his death, for he was a wise and good man, and we are told by a scald named Kikina, that

“ ‘The tears o'er good King Magnus' bier,  
The people's tears, were all sincere :  
His house-thralls wept as for a friend.’

“ It might be supposed that Harald Hardråde was now content ; for St. Olave's playful prediction concerning him was accomplished. He was a ‘king,’ the sole king of Norway : but he was one of those proud, ambitious men who, as we are told by the Prophet Habakkuk, ‘*keepeth not at home, but enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied.*’ Magnus, before his death, had appointed Sweyn as his successor to the crown of Denmark ; saying it was ‘just that Harald should rule over Norway, and Sweyn over Denmark.’

“ Harald, however, did not like this arrangement, and attacked Denmark the following summer, ‘harrying and burning wide around in the land ;’ but the Danes did not wish to have him for their king, as they preferred Sweyn, who was a descendant of

their own ancient royal race. Some of them even made a mock of Harald and his pretensions ; which was rather imprudent, when so bold a warrior as Harald the Stern was concerned.

“ One lady, we are told, paid very dearly for having in jest cut her cheese into the shape of anchors, and said that such anchors might hold all the ships of the Norway king. This was said by Dotta, the daughter of a great lord named Thorkill Geysu, and the jest being repeated to Harald, he landed near her father’s house, burned it to the ground, and carried off his daughters bound to his ships. The sorrow of the poor girls is thus described by Granck :—

“ ‘ The gold-adorn’d lady’s eye  
Through Hornskof wood was never dry,  
As downward toward the sandy shore  
The men their lovely prizes bore.  
The Norway leader kept at bay  
The foe who would contest the way,  
And Dotta’s father had to bring  
Treasure to satisfy the king.’ ”

“ O, papa ! ” exclaimed Agnes, “ was Dotta carried quite away from home ? ”

“ No, my dear,” replied her father ;

"Thorkill Geysu ransomed his daughters with a great sum; and Dotta having received this severe punishment for her inconsiderate jest, accompanied her father back to his desolated home. Harald, on his side, carried off his booty to Norway, and left the Danish people in peace during the few following winter months; but as soon as the warm spring arrived, the Norsemen came down again upon their hapless foes, whose lives must have been full of discomfort on this account, for we are told—

" 'The Danes were everywhere in fear,  
For the dread foray every year.'

"King Harald was determined at last to bring the disputed matter, if possible, to an issue; so he sent a message one winter to King Sweyn, requesting of him to meet him the following spring at the Gotha river and fight, and so settle that the one who gained the victory should have both kingdoms.

"King Harald, having raised a large force early in the spring, sailed to the appointed place of meeting; but finding that Sweyn had failed in coming thither, he let

all the Bonder troops return home, and, manning eighty ships, he sailed southward to Jutland, and laid waste the country. Tidings were suddenly brought to him that Sweyn was coming upon him with the Danish fleet, consisting of three hundred ships. Some one said it was better to fly than to face such a multitude of foes. The following lines tell us what was his answer:—

“ With falcon eye, and courage bright,  
Our king saw glory in the fight;  
To fly, he saw, would ruin bring  
On them and him—the folk and king.  
“ Hand up the arms to one and all !”  
Cries out the king; “ we ’ll win or fall !  
Sooner than fly, heap’d on each other,  
Each man shall fall across his brother.” ”

“ The battle was very sharp, each king urging his men ; but after a struggle of many hours, the Danes gave way, and even King Sweyn’s ship was captured, the whole crew having either fallen or sprung into the ocean ; and a great search was made among the slain for the body of the Danish king, who, it was supposed, must have been drowned or slain. Meanwhile a Norwegian



earl, named Hakon, was hailed by a small boat which approached his ship, and the stout rower within it called out, 'Where is the earl?' The earl cast a look at the man and asked what his name was. He answered, 'Here is Vandraade (the Unlucky :) speak to me, earl.'

"The earl leaned over the ship's side to him. Then the man in the boat said, 'Earl, I will accept my life from thee, if thou wilt give it me.'

"Then the earl raised himself up, and calling two of his most trusty men, desired them to get into the boat and to bring Vandraade to land. 'Attend him,' said he, 'to my friend's, Karl the Bonder; and tell Karl, as a token that these words come from me, that he is to let Vandraade have the horse which I gave to him yesterday, and also his saddle; and his son to attend him.'"

"Ah! I suppose," said Margaret Daleson, "that was King Sweyn, who was making his escape."

"Yes, it was," replied her father.

"King Harald never would have asked

his life in that way," observed Henry. "Do you think he would, papa?"

"No," replied his father; "Harald was too bold a warrior to crave his life from any man. And yet King Sweyn seems upon other occasions to have been by no means deficient in courage: but we shall now see how it fared with him at Karl's. They arrived at the Bonder's farm just at the dawn of day, and found Karl in his room dressing. On hearing the earl's message, Karl said they must first take some food; and he set a table before them, and gave them water to wash with.

"Then came his wife into the room, and said, 'I wonder why we could get no peace or rest all night with the shouting and screaming?'

"Karl replies, 'Dost thou not know that the kings were fighting until late at night?'

"She asked which had the best of it?"

"Karl answered, 'The Northmen gained.'

"Then," said she, 'our king will have taken flight.'

"Nobody knows,' says Karl, 'whether he has fled or fallen.'

“‘What a useless sort of king we have!’ exclaimed she; ‘he is both slow and frightened.’

“Then said Vandraade, ‘Frightened he is not; but he is not lucky.’

“As Vandraade spoke thus, he was in the act of washing his hands, and taking up the towel, he dried them right in the middle of the cloth. The housewife snatched the towel from him and said, ‘What an ill-taught fellow thou art! It is wasteful to wet the whole cloth at once.’”

Henry and Agnes laughed outright at the homely reprimand of the Bonder’s wife. “That puts me in mind,” said Henry, “of something I read the other day in the Life of King Alfred, who was so severely scolded by the cow-herd’s wife for having allowed the cakes to be burned in her absence.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Daleson, “there is some similarity in the two stories; but Alfred was too noble-minded to punish the unintentional rudeness of the woman to her sovereign. Sweyn was less forgiving, as you will find out just now. Meanwhile he only observed that perhaps the time might

yet come when he would be well enough off in the world to be able to dry his hands in the middle of the towel.

“After having all breakfasted together, the earl’s men returned to their ship; and Karl, saddling two horses, sent off Vandraade under his son’s care through many forest paths into the south of the country.

“Before long King Sweyn appeared at his capital in Zealand, and soon afterward he sent north to Jutland for Karl the Bonder to come to him. On the Bonder’s arrival, he was brought before the king, who asked if he knew him, or thought he had ever seen him before.

“Karl replies, ‘I know thee, sire, and knew thee before, the moment I saw thee; and God be praised if the small help I could give was of any use to thee.’

“The king, after acknowledging that he owed to him all the days he had yet to live, offered him the choice of any farm in Zealand he might wish to have, and also promised, in case of his good conduct, to make him a great man.

“Karl thanked the king for his promise,

and said he had now but one thing to ask. Sweyn inquired what that was.

“ ‘Sire,’ replied Karl, ‘that I may take my wife with me.’

“ But the king, remembering the hard words and deeds of the Bonder’s wife, did not choose to have her so near him; and the sacredness of marriage being at that time very little understood, he told Karl that he could not let him do that; but that he would provide him with ‘a far better and more sensible wife,—and,’ said he, ‘thy wife can keep the Bonder-farm ye had before, and she will have her living from it.’

“ Karl made no further objection, and, having accepted a wife and an estate from the king, became a considerable man in the province of Zealand.

“ Harald Hardråde had now for fifteen years been sole king of Norway, and many successful forays had he made in Denmark, and much plunder had he carried home from thence; but he was as far as ever from wearing its crown, as the Danes, who were a brave and united people, did not choose to have a foreigner to reign over them. So,

at last, he was induced to listen to proposals of peace between the two nations; and it was agreed that a meeting should take place between the kings at the Gotha river, which formed the boundary between their kingdoms;—for at that time the southern part of Sweden formed part of the Danish dominions. The people were weary of war, and rejoiced much at the prospect of peace. So Harald and Sweyn agreed together that each of them should keep his own kingdom according to the old established boundaries, and that this peace should endure as long as they were kings. This peace was confirmed by an oath; and having given each other hostages, the two kings returned home, Harald to Norway, and Sweyn to Denmark.

“The people in these two kingdoms must have felt very glad to enjoy a little quietness; and perhaps they flattered themselves with the hope that it might last a long time; but before two years of tranquillity had passed over, an occasion of war arose from a quarter whence it was least expected.

“Harald Hardråde had, on his accession to the throne of Norway, sent ambassadors

to the King of England, who received his offers of friendship with great cordiality; and ever since then the two nations had been at peace: but about the time of which I now speak, King Edward the Confessor having died, Harald the son of Godwin was elected as his successor; and one of his brothers, named Tostig, being a proud and turbulent man, was discontented with the share of power given to him by his brother. He accordingly resolved, if possible, to dethrone Harald, and applied first to the Danish monarch, Sweyn, for assistance in his enterprise, promising to help him with all the power he could command in England, if he would go over with a Danish army, and 'win the country,' as his uncle Canute had done about fifty years before. But Sweyn replied, that he was a much smaller man than Canute the Great, and had quite enough to do to defend his own Danish dominions from the Norsemen, without going to attack his neighbors.

"Earl Tostig was much displeased at this answer, and observed, that the result of his errand being less fortunate than he had

expected from a relative, and one, too, who was esteemed a gallant man, he would seek for help elsewhere ; ‘and it may be,’ said he, ‘that I shall find a chief who is less afraid, king, than thou art, of a great enterprise.’ So the king and the earl parted on no very friendly terms.

“And now Earl Tostig wended his way to Norway, and found the Norse king at rest in his winter home ; but although hemmed in by the northern snows, and having no longer the fiery blood of youth within his veins, Harald Hardråde still glowed with ambition, and burned with the desire for glory. He listened eagerly to Tostig, as he related his wrongs, and invited Harald to the conquest of England, pledging himself that multitudes of the English would join his standard, especially in the northern part of the island, where the people were mostly Norsemen by descent, and still cherished the memory of their ancient country.

“Harald objected at first that his people were tired of war, and that a campaign in England would be distasteful to them ; but



Tostig was too well acquainted with his character to give up the point without a struggle.

“ ‘All men allow,’ said he, ‘that there never was so brave and successful a warrior in the northern lands as thou art; and it seemeth to me strange that thou hast been fighting for fifteen years for Denmark, and will not put forth thy strength to seize upon England, which lies open to thee.’

“Harald listened to the voice of the tempter; he felt proud of his own widespread renown, and resolved to become the conqueror of England, or to die in the attempt. Many and long were the conversations he had with Tostig; and, as soon as spring appeared, he sent out a message-token through the country, ordering a levy of one-half of all the men in Norway able to carry arms. Tostig, on his part, sailed to Flanders, where a large body of English and Flemings awaited his orders.

“The Norwegians had many different thoughts about the intended expedition. Some said that the English were too brave and too numerous to be conquered by an

other nation. Others reckoned up King Harald's achievements, and said, that he was the man who could accomplish this. They all spoke their opinion freely, but all alike obeyed their sovereign's call with cheerfulness and alacrity.

"While preparations were thus making in Norway, and the merry month of May was passing on amid bustle and excitement, the hearts of the men of England were by no means tranquil within them; for not only did they hear rumors of invasion from afar, but also at home were they scared by the appearance of a fiery meteor, which seemed to portend some overwhelming evil to the land. Night after night crowds used to assemble to gaze at the terrible visitant, and prayers were offered up in the churches to avert the coming woe.

"The comet soon passed away, but a more substantial foe was preparing to approach the English coast. Harald Haldræde (the Stern) had gathered together a noble fleet of 200 vessels, at the mouth of Sagne Fiord; and as they lay there glancing brightly, with their gilded prows and sterns,

in the summer sun, the great chieftain himself delayed his departure awhile for the purpose of visiting St. Olave's shrine. He went thither alone, and having opened the shrine and gazed upon the remains of the Hero and the Saint, he locked it again and threw the keys into the river Nid, resolved that no later hand than his own should penetrate into its recesses.

“ Although the Norsemen were so brave and daring a people, yet they were not insensible to the peril of their present undertaking; and while lying in the neighborhood of Solundei, many an ill-omened dream had the warriors in the fleet, and these they detailed to their comrades. Some of them have been handed down to us, and were doubtless terrible enough to stir the restless imaginations of the Norsemen. A man named Gyrdir, who was on board the king's ship, dreamed that he saw a great witch-wife standing on the island, with a fork in one hand and a trough in the other. He saw her pass over the whole fleet; and a fowl sat on the stern of each ship, and that fowl was a raven; and he heard her sing a

long and dolorous ditty, the last verse of which ran thus:—

“ ‘Through wind and through weather  
We’re sailing together ;  
I sail with the ravens ;  
I watch with the ravens ;  
I snatch from the ravens  
My share of the bones.’

“ In this gloomy fashion did the day-thoughts of the Norsemen shape themselves into dreams, suited to the fantastic superstitions of their country ; nor was Harald Hardråde free from the same sort of impressions. He was, as I have already told you, a scald, or poet ; and having very naturally dreamed of seeing his brother St. Olave, whose shrine he had just visited, he conceived that the following verses were sung to him by the Saint:—

“ ‘In many a fight  
My name was bright ;  
Men weep and tell  
How Olave fell.  
Thy death is near ;  
Thy corpse, I fear,  
The crow will feed,  
The witch-wife’s steed.’

“Harald, however, was of too bold and determined a spirit to be daunted by dream or omen; so on he sailed with his noble fleet, taking with him Queen Ellisof and her two daughters, Maria and Ingegird. He was also accompanied by his son Olave, a brave youth, who, like his father, loved better to ride the ‘ocean steed’<sup>o</sup> than to remain on shore. Harald, before leaving Norway, had provided for the government of the country by setting up his son Magnus as king during his absence. The fleet sailed first for the Orkney Islands, from whence he took with him a large armed force under their chieftains, Earls Paul and Esling; but he left behind him Queen Ellisof and her daughters. Maria was his best beloved daughter; and before parting from her, he had betrothed her to a young noble, named Eystein Orre, who was high in his favor, and who accompanied him in his expedition.

“And now every sail was set, and they were impelled by a favorable breeze along the eastern coast of England. Their course

<sup>o</sup> It was by this name the Norsemen called their ships.

was marked with desolation. They first landed at Cleveland, ravaging the country at every point where opposition was made to them; next they plundered and burned Scarborough; and then, sailing up the Humber and Ouse, they encountered Morcar, the Earl of Northumbria, with all his forces, at a place called Bishopsthorpe, near York, where, after a brief but sanguinary battle, Morcar was defeated, and York agreed to open its gates to the invader.

“On that evening Harald returned with a merry heart to his ships, which lay in the river; for it had been settled that on the following day the castle and city of York should be delivered into his hands; and it was a proud thought to him that he was already master of the second city in the kingdom; but he little knew that during that night of security and triumph the English king had appeared before York, which gladly opened its gates to him, and received him and his army within its walls.

“The morning of Monday, the 25th September, (1066,) shone out so warmly and brightly, that it seemed to accord well with

the glad hearts of the Norsemen as they left their ships to take possession of York. Harald left one-third of his forces in the ships under his son Olave, accompanied by the Earls of Orkney and Eystein Orre. Harald's troops, expecting neither danger nor struggle, laid aside their armor on account of the great heat of the weather, and went on shore only with their shields, helmets, and spears, and girt with their swords; many also had bows and arrows, and all were merry as they advanced toward the city. But as they approached the castle a cloud of dust became visible, as if from horses' feet, and athwart the cloud were seen shining shields and bright armor. The king halted his troops, and inquired of Earl Tostig what army this could be. The earl replied that they were probably some of his friends advancing to their aid. A few moments more decided the question, for the nearer this force came, the greater it appeared; and from amid the array of arms, which shone like glancing ice, appeared the banner of England, denoting the king's presence among his troops. Earl Tostig,

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knowing the strength and vigor of his brother's army, advised Hardråde to return to his ships, where his men might put on their armor, and be reinforced by their comrades in the fleet: but the thought even of a temporary retreat was hateful to the Norseman.

“‘Nay,’ replied he, ‘rather send three of our swiftest riders to summon the people to our aid. The Englishmen shall have a hard struggle before we give up ourselves for lost.’

“‘That is as thou wilt,’ observed Earl Tostig, ‘for it is by no means my wish to fly.’

“Hardråde now caused his banner called ‘Landeyda’ (the Ravager of the Earth) to be set up, and around it were he and his followers stationed, in the form of a hollow circle, shield meeting shield, so as to present a scaly glittering wall to the enemy, while their spears were driven into the earth before them, in order to check the onset of the hostile cavalry. The light archers were placed wherever the enemy seemed to threaten an attack. Harald of England



marshaled his forces in the more formidable fashion of a wedge, or triangle, thus  $\Delta$ , so that, in attack, the men marched on the enemy, offering the narrowest possible front of danger; and in defence, three sides of the battalion were presented to the foe. As the English monarch advanced with his men, he espied a Norwegian leader with a bright blue mantle and a glittering helmet, mounted on a coal-black charger, surveying the line. The Norwegian's horse stumbled, and cast his rider on the earth.

“ ‘Who,’ inquired Harald, ‘is that gigantic man who has fallen from his steed?’ ”

“ On being informed that it was his royal foe, he exclaimed aloud: ‘A stately man: but his luck, you see, has already forsaken him.’ ”

“ The Norseman, with his usual readiness, exclaimed, as he sprang upon his horse, ‘A fall forebodes luck to travelers.’ ”

“ Twenty horsemen, all of whom, with their steeds, were completely cased in iron, advanced from the English army, and one of them rode forward and inquired for Earl Tostig.

“ ‘Know that I am he,’ said the Northumbrian chieftain.

“ ‘King Harald,’ said the horseman, ‘sends you his greeting, and this message: He offers peace and all Northumbria: ay, and to secure your friendship, he would not deem a third of his kingdom too high a price.’

“ ‘’Tis a pity,’ replied Tostig, ‘that this offer was not made before so much blood was spilt; but if I accept it, what shall be given to Harald the Norseman for the expense and trouble of the war?’

“ ‘Seven feet of England’s earth, or as much more as his length exceeds that of other men,’ was the warrior’s answer.

“ ‘Then go and tell King Harald to get ready for the battle; for never shall it be said among the Norwegians that Earl Tostig forsook their king in the land of his enemies. Together will we conquer England, or together die with honor.’

“ So the horseman returned. The Norwegian king having learned from Tostig that the spokesman was no less a person than Harald of England, blamed him for having let so rich a booty escape.

“ ‘He came,’ replied Tostig, ‘as a messenger of peace ; and I should be his murderer if I had betrayed him ; and I would rather he should be my murderer than I his, if one of two must die.’

“ At this moment Harald Hardråde gave vent to his warlike enthusiasm in the following verses :—

“ ‘Advance ! advance !  
No helmets glance,  
But blue swords play,  
In our array.  
Advance ! advance !  
No mail-coats glance,  
But hearts are here  
That ne’er knew fear.’

“ Thereupon, Thordolf, the scald, inspired by the royal song, chanted aloud :—

“ ‘And should our king in battle fall,—  
A fate that God may give to all,—  
His sons will vengeance take ;  
And never shone the sun upon  
Two nobler eaglets in his run :  
And them we ’ll ne’er forsake.’

“ Now the English attacked the Norwegian circle, but were unable to pierce through the iron pallisade ; and, retreating from before their enemies, the Norsemen,

in their eagerness to pursue them, broke forth from their wall of shields, and rushed forward to assail them. The Englishmen turned about, and boldly met the attack. When Hardråde perceived that his men were getting the worst of it, he rushed into the thickest of the fray, hewing down with both hands all that opposed him ; and the ardent impetuosity of this gigantic man created such horror wherever he appeared, that the fortune of the field seemed to be his, when a fatal arrow pierced his neck, and laid him lifeless on the earth.

“Tostig now placed himself near the ‘Ravager of the Earth,’ and although peace was again offered to him, he rejected it, and fell fighting with the boldness of a lion. At this moment Eystein Orre, the suitor of Hardråde’s daughter, arrived from the ships with a party of Norsemen ; and, hearing of their king’s death, they set up a terrific war-shout, and fought with such impetuous fury, that most of them fell upon the field of battle ; so that at the close of that day, which had dawned so brightly upon the joyous Norsemen, they were a small

disbanded and defeated remnant—but not a dishonored one, for their memorable answer to Harald's offer of safety if they surrendered to him can never be forgotten, viz., 'that they would rather fall one across the other than leave the field where their king lay slain.'

"Thus ended one of the most memorable and important battles that was ever fought in England—the last battle fought by a Norwegian king upon English ground. Young Olave had, by the command of his father, remained in charge of the fleet, and thus escaped the slaughter which might otherwise have been his fate; and being summoned by Harald to come and receive his father's corpse, he was kindly received by the victor, with whom he entered into a treaty of amity and peace. Twenty-four ships were assigned to him, to bear him home, together with the remnant of the Norwegian army; but the remainder were kept by Harald, together with a vast quantity of the treasure which Hardråde had amassed in eastern lands. The conqueror had, however, but a brief time to glory in

his victory, for while he was still celebrating it with great festivity at York, tidings were brought to him that William of Normandy, with sixty thousand men, had landed near Hastings. Harald hastened southward to meet the foe, and nineteen days after the battle near York followed the still more memorable one of Hastings, which placed England beneath Norman rule, and avenged Hardråde by the hands of those who were descended from the same brave race of Norsemen as himself."

Mr. Daleson paused. After a moment's silence, Henry said, "O, papa, what a fine fellow Harald Hardråde was; I am so sorry he was slain!"

"He was doubtless one of the best specimens of Norse heroes," replied his father; "daring in battle, ambitious in design, and reckless of life in the pursuit either of wealth or glory. But, my dear boy," continued Mr. Daleson, "I need scarcely tell you that Christian heroism is of a far higher and purer type than that which is presented to us in the history of Hardråde; and if I had been relating to you stories out of modern

history rather than from the northern sagas, I could have told you of men who, although brave as lions in the field of battle, yet always longed to restore to their fellow-creatures the blessing of peace. If you mean to be a hero one of these days," added he, "this is the sort of character which I trust you will choose as your model."

Henry colored up, and said, gravely, "I hope so, sir."

"You have never told us, papa," said Agnes, "what became of Queen Ellisof and her daughters."

"The queen and her daughter Ingigerd returned to Norway with the youthful Olave, and history does not give us any further account of their lives: but as for the Princess Maria, her fate was a singular one. On the same day, and at the same hour, at which her beloved father was slain in England, she suddenly expired in the Orkney Isles, and was thus spared the misery of knowing that she had lost the two beings who were dearest to her upon earth; for Eystein Orre, who was her destined husband, had fallen by Hardråde's side."

"Ah! poor Maria!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Have you any more stories in your 'budget' for us, papa?" inquired Margaret.

"The history of the Norsemen," replied her father, "abounds with many stories which would be interesting to you all; but I have purposely chosen the present series, as relating to that period of our own history in which England both gained and suffered much from her connection with Norway. Henry's holydays being now nearly over, it is too late to begin another series; but, perhaps, if we are all allowed to meet again around our Christmas fireside, I may once more have the pleasure of telling you stories of the men of the olden times."

THE END.



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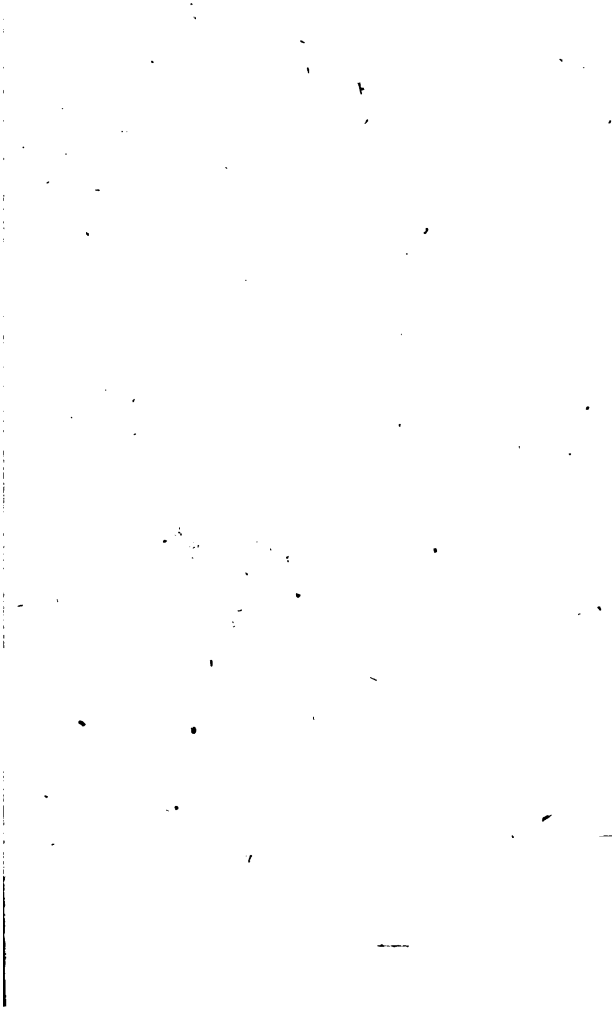
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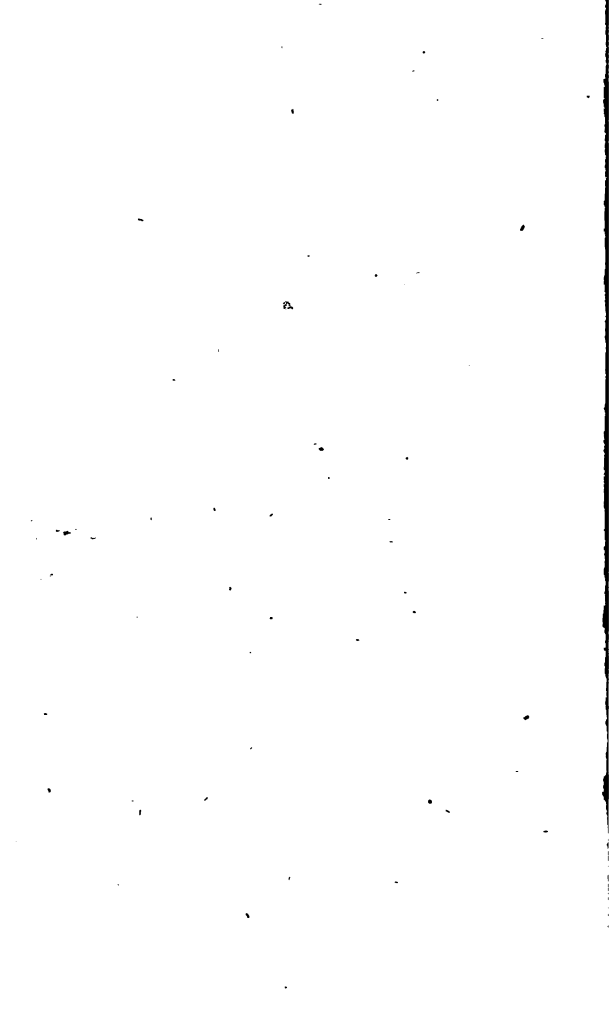
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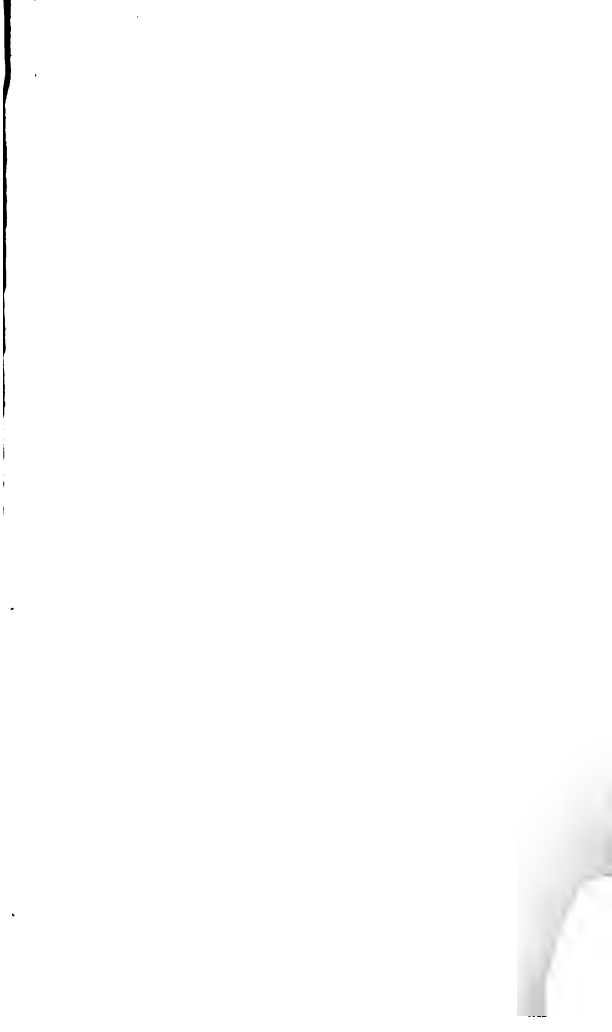


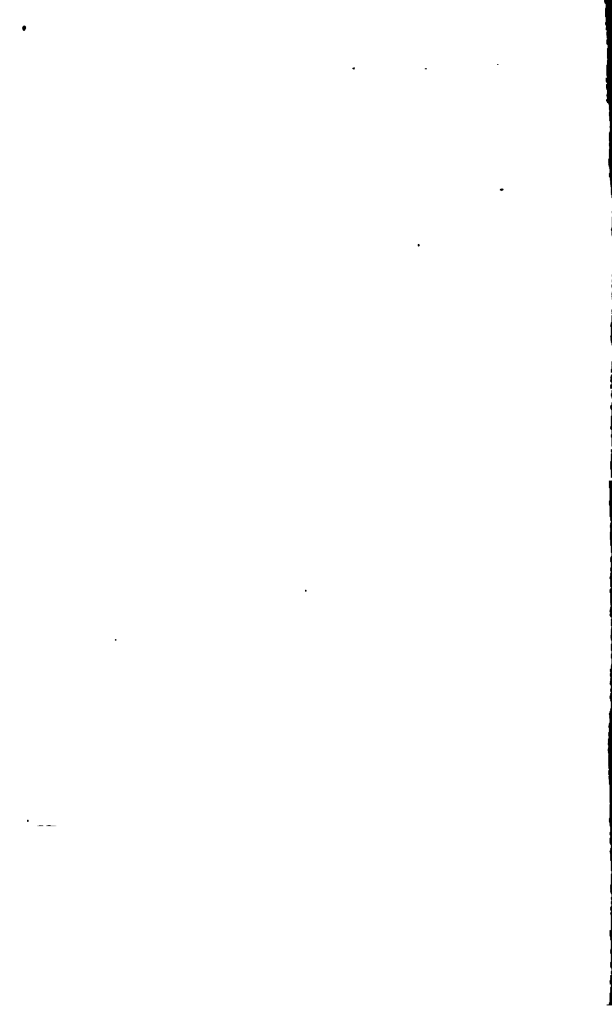












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